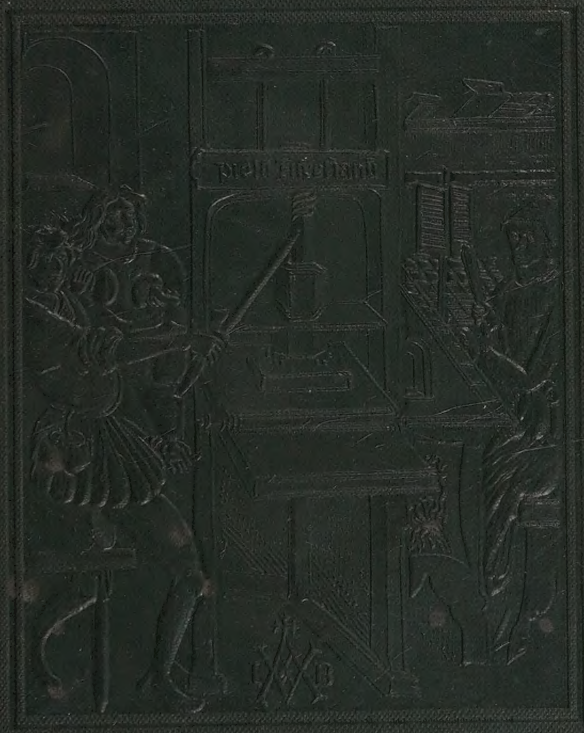
MASTER MAKERS OF THE BOOK

WILLIAM DANA ORCUTT



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Master Makers of the Book

Books by William Dana Orcutt

GOOD OLD DORCHESTER

THE PRINCESS KALLISTO

ROBERT CAVELIER

THE FLOWER OF DESTINY

THE SPELL

THE LEVER

THE DESK REFERENCE BOOK

THE MOTH

THE MADONNA OF SACRIFICE

THE BACHELORS

BURROWS OF MICHIGAN AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

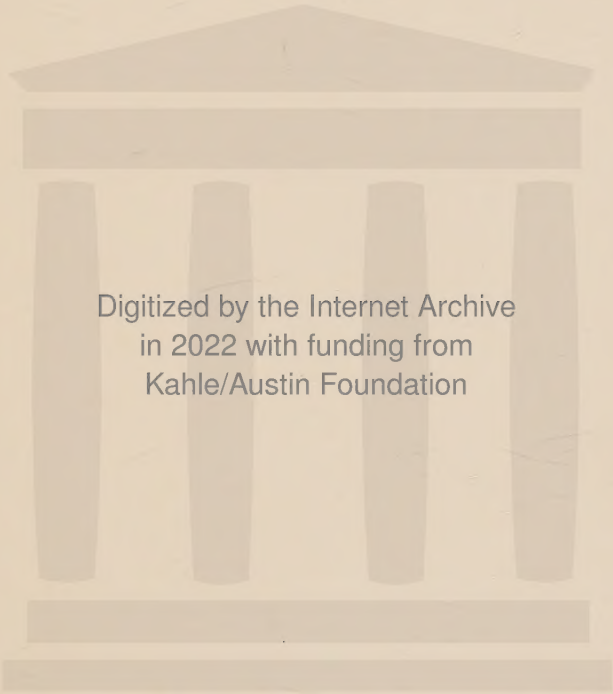
THE BALANCE

IN QUEST OF THE PERFECT BOOK

THE KINGDOM OF BOOKS

THE BOOK IN ITALY

MASTER MAKERS OF THE BOOK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ALDUS MANUTIUS

From a copy of Virgil's *Bucolics* (1501), the first of the Aldine Classics. This volume was bound by Roger Payne. On the recto is inlaid an original portrait of Virgil by Fuseli, and on the verso an original portrait of Aldus similarly inlaid, and painted by the same artist. The volume was formerly a part of the famous collection of the Earl of Spencer, but is now in the possession of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England. This reproduction, same size as the original, is through the courtesy of Dr. Henry Guppy, Librarian.

Master Makers of The Book

Being a consecutive Story of the Book from a Century before the Invention of Printing through the Era of the Doves Press

By
William Dana Orcutt

Garden City *New York*
Doubleday, Doran & Company, *Inc.*
1928

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"ARE *we not driven to the conclusion that of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy are the things called Books?*"

THOMAS CARLYLE

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I · FORERUNNERS OF ALDUS

Why the Printed Book Came into Being

I · FORERUNNERS OF ALDUS

Why the Printed Book Came into Being

∴

Books have become so intimate a part of our every-day life that few of us stop to realize what it would mean to be without them. As long ago as 1672 Thomas Bartholin wrote, "Without books, God is silent, justice dormant, natural science at a stand, philosophy lame, letters dumb, and all things involved in Cimmerian darkness." Yet books, as we know them, came into being less than five centuries ago. The manuscript volume of the sixth century, or even of the fifteenth, was a book, but, because of the cost involved in its production, its usefulness in disseminating knowledge and culture was limited to the class which really required it least. Until the invention of printing liberated the Book to the masses, civilization was held in check by the wealthy princes and patrons of art, whose prestige and power rested in perpetuating the ignorance of the people whom they ruled.

To the ancients, the magnificent handwritten, illuminated volumes were far more than objects of

art or things of beauty: they were the tangible tribute paid by the cultured class to the thought of the author in its passage to the reader, using the written page as vehicle. This gem of thought was to them far more precious than any costly jewel. These true booklovers gave permanence to it by employing accomplished scribes to write it out, letter by letter, on the leaf of parchment; they enhanced its beauty by adding illuminated embellishments executed by famous artists; and they gave protection to it by enclosing the written and enriched pages in sumptuous bindings, in which gold, silver, and even precious jewels were sometimes actually inlaid.

This was the approach to the Book on the part of the old-time collectors; but there was also a practical use to which the handwritten volume was put. In it were inscribed the basic truths upon which rested the spiritual welfare of the world, and by its means the Church recorded and disseminated those doctrines which received its approval.

Thus a large percentage of the original manuscript volumes were duplicated by scribes in religious establishments. The primary object of this duplication was the desire to secure, by exchange, copies of other original manuscripts owned by other monasteries. At first, the copying was done by

individual monastic scribes, who devoted six hours a day, as a part of their religious duty, to the laborious task of writing out on parchment the text of the original which lay in front of them. In the cloisters of Gloucester Cathedral the windows which were assigned to these scribes are still pointed out to interested visitors. No artificial light was permitted, for fear of injury to the original manuscript. Later, the more important monasteries established *scriptoria*, or writing rooms, and this greatly increased the facilities for producing additional copies of important manuscripts. It has been said that more than half the literary work of Europe was executed in religious houses.

The *scriptorium* was usually a large room located over the chapter house. In it were placed twenty to thirty writing desks, at each of which a monk would seat himself, with a sheet of parchment spread out before him, upon which he inscribed the words that came to him from a reader who sat upon a raised platform, assigned to this duty because of his peculiar familiarity with the subject matter of the volume. An "edition," in those early days, was limited to the number of desks the *scriptorium* could contain. Silence was strictly enforced, such inter-communication as was required being accomplished by means of an elaborate system of signs. If a scribe required a missal,

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for instance, for the purpose of reference, he extended his hands and made the motion of turning over leaves, adding the sign of the cross; if he desired some pagan volume, he supplemented his movement of turning leaves by scratching his ear like a dog!

It is easy to understand how so many errors crept into the early manuscript volumes: the air in the room became heavy, the voice of the reader became tired, the hand of the scribe became cramped from continued use. All this is of importance when we come later to a consideration of the printed book, which in many cases was put into type directly from the handwritten volume, because it emphasizes the necessity of the editorial work which had to be done by the early printers upon the manuscript in order to secure even comparative accuracy.

As time went on, the wealthy collectors desired to add to their libraries volumes which were not ecclesiastical in nature, and this resulted in encouraging secular scribes to take up the art of hand-lettering. The volumes thus produced, as a rule, are finer examples of the art, having been executed under more favorable conditions. The work was done by scribes and illuminators who adopted the profession because they loved it, instead of by those who performed it for six hours a day as a part of their religious routine.

The development of the handlettering in the various volumes is a story in itself. The earliest books in Western handwritings show the Roman capitals, with which we are familiar from the inscriptions on ancient monuments. In the seventh and eighth centuries, handlettering assumed national characteristics, out of which came the Merovingian style in France, the Lombardic in Italy, and the Visigothic in Spain. All these were involved and complicated, and thus impractical. It remained for Emperor Charlemagne, at the end of the eighth century, to establish the Carolingian School at Tours, with Alcuin of York at its head, from which came the alphabet with its capitals (majescules) and lower-case letters (minuscules) as we know it today.

This is of supreme importance in the evolution of the Book, as the Italian scribes of the fifteenth century developed the Carolingian hand to its highest point of excellence, and the early Italian printers, in turn, based the design of their first types upon this handlettering. Germany alone held out against the Roman style, developing, during the next century, the angular and less legible Gothic letter. The Gothic design, as seen in the early German examples, is a definite and direct echo of the German handwriting. It seems curious that Charlemagne should have summoned an Eng-

lishman to Tours to put into practical execution his wonderful vision of an eclectic handwriting to replace the prevailing Merovingian style; but Alcuin was a man who had achieved international reputation as a poet and a writer. To him Charlemagne also entrusted the installation of his ecclesiastical and educational reforms.

The decoration of the manuscript volumes was a thing quite apart from the handlettering. The scribes who wrote out the letters of the text left blank spaces for the initials at the beginning of each chapter or section. These were later filled in by other scribes, called rubricators or illuminators, more accomplished in this particular phase of the art, sometimes with plain rubricated initials, sometimes with elaborate designs in colors and gold, running out into the margin and "lighting up" the entire page. These artists also inserted the headings, the liturgical instructions, and the colophons at the end. They secured their *minium* (vermilion) from India and Spain, their *lapis lazuli* from Persia and Bokhara, and the Byzantine gold ink was made by the illuminators themselves out of pure gold from the Orient. The large gold initials were raised with a peculiar elastic substance, which was later covered with gold leaf and highly burnished.

Vellum (calfskin) was the usual material upon

which these manuscript books were written and decorated. In manuscripts earlier than the tenth century the skins are peculiarly white and fine; later, particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, virgin parchment, very thin and soft as velvet, made from the skins of stillborn kids, was largely employed.

In binding the volumes of the Middle Ages, leather was ordinarily used. This was laid over solid wooden boards, with four or five bands across the back. The sheets of parchment were firmly secured by passing the thread through the leaves, and then over these bands. The parchment strings, which projected from the thread-sewed back, were securely pegged into small holes and grooves cut in the wooden sides. The more elaborately decorated volumes were bound with ivory, silver, or solid gold sides, frequently inlaid with precious stones.

With such sumptuous art put into the making of books, it is easy to understand why the wealthy and cultured princes of the fifteenth century should consider this tangible expression of the thought of man as something which belonged exclusively to them, and that they should have looked upon the idea of perpetuating it through mechanical means as unworthy of consideration. The attitude of these true lovers of the Book is fully explained in the

writings of Vespasiano da Bisticci, the last of the medieval scribes and the earliest of booksellers. As the agent of Cosimo de'Medici, Nicholas v, and Frederick, Duke of Urbino, he brought together three of the finest collections of manuscript volumes in all Europe. Of Duke Frederick's famous library, Bisticci tells us that thirty to forty copyists were continuously employed during fourteen years in transcribing Greek and Latin manuscripts, the ecclesiastical and medieval authors, and the Italian poets and humanists. The volumes were bound in crimson leather with silver clasps, the hand-lettering was on the finest grade of vellum, gorgeously decorated with miniatures and illuminations — "nor could you find a single printed volume in the whole library, for the Duke would have been ashamed to own one."

During all this time there was another influence at work which, all unconsciously, paved the way for the success of the invention of printing. This was the so-called "humanistic movement," which was the forerunner and the essence of the Renaissance, of which Francis Petrarch stands as the father and the inciting force. Too little attention has been paid to Petrarch in considering the origin and evolution of printing. Had it not been for the efforts of Petrarch and his enthusiastic band of followers, who demanded a proper recognition of the

rich humanities of Greece and Rome, the actual manuscripts of many of the present standard classics would have been hopelessly lost to posterity. Petrarch died in 1374. The Greek Empire was destroyed in 1453. Between these two dates Italy recovered the Greek classics and many of the Latin; but there would have been little incentive to preserve them except for the promulgation of the humanistic creed.

It was through the influence of Petrarch that Boccaccio became so ardent a Greek scholar, and, after the death of his master, so enthusiastically carried on his work as humanist. Benvenuto da Imola, a pupil of Boccaccio's, gives a vivid picture of the lack of respect paid at that time to original manuscripts:

"I will relate what my revered teacher, Boccaccio of Certaldo, humorously told me. He said that when he was in Apulia, attracted by the celebrity of the convent, he paid a visit to Monte Cassino, whereof Dante speaks. Desirous of seeing the collection of books, which he understood to be a very choice one, he modestly asked a monk — for he was always most courteous in manners — to open the library, as a favor for him. The monk answered stiffly, pointing to a steep staircase, 'Go up; it is open.' Boccaccio went up gladly; but he found that the place which held so great a treasure

was without door or key. He entered, and saw grass sprouting on the windows, and all the books and benches thick with dust. In his astonishment he began to open and turn the leaves of first one tome and then another, and found many and divers volumes of ancient and foreign works. Some of them had lost several sheets; others were snipped and pared all round the text, and mutilated in various ways. At length, lamenting that the toil and study of so many illustrious men should have passed into the hands of most abandoned wretches, he departed with tears and sighs. Coming to the cloister, he asked a monk whom he met why those valuable books had been so disgracefully mangled. He answered that the monks, seeking to gain a few *soldi*, were in the habit of cutting off sheets and making psalters, which they sold to boys. The margins, too, they manufactured into charms, and sold to women. So then, O man of study, go to and rack your brains; make books that you may come to this! "

Francis Petrarch's place in the story of the Book has nothing to do with his Italian poetry or with his *Rime* to the immortal Laura. He died almost a century before the printed book came into being, and he could never have dreamt of what its possibilities might be; yet through his love for the Latin classics, which he knew by heart, and by his recogni-

tion of the value of the Greek classics, which he longed to know, he created a fervor for the humanities, and so prepared the way that the printing press, when it did come, was able to accomplish its most important service for the world.

Born in 1304, Petrarch passed his youth near Avignon. After receiving the ordinary instruction of an Italian youth in grammar and rhetoric, he spent four years at Montpellier, and later took up the study of law at Bologna. Here he made his first collection of books, finding the lure of the collector far more potent than the demands of legal knowledge. When his father paid him a visit here and discovered the situation, the irate parent began to burn the precious manuscript volumes, but the youth's heartfelt protestations and promises to devote himself more assiduously to his legal studies preserved a portion of the volumes he had so eagerly gathered together. That he tried to live up to his promise is recorded, but the attractions of the written word proved irresistible.

With his life thus devoted to the service of the Book, Petrarch declared that he himself had become a victim of the "general epidemic," being afflicted with the "writing disease." "All the world is taking up the writer's part," he said, "which ought to be confined to a few; the number of the sick increases, and the disease becomes daily

more virulent." "Literary fame," he added, "is but a harvest of thin air, and it is only fit for sailors to watch a breeze and to whistle for a wind."

When twenty-five years of age Petrarch traveled throughout Europe, making additions to his collections. "Whether I am being shaved or having my hair cut," he wrote, "and whether I am riding or dining, I either read or get some one to read to me."

Having learned from personal experience how much this companionship with books meant, he began to emphasize the importance of the higher education of the people, and to urge the establishment of public libraries. His influence with many nobles of wealth resulted in largely increasing the resources of several existing libraries, and of establishing others.

Speaking of his Greek volumes, which he could not himself read, Petrarch said: "Homer is dumb or I am deaf; I am delighted with his looks; and as often as I embrace a silent volume I agree, 'O lustrous bard, how gladly would I listen to thy song if only I had not lost my hearing.'" After his travels, Petrarch returned to Avignon in 1337, and established a new home for his books at Vaucluse. Such was the fame he gained that three years later he was offered a laureate's crown by Rome and by Paris. "I start today," he wrote to Colonna, "to

receive my reward over the graves of those who were the pride of ancient Rome, and in the very theater of their exploits."

Later, at Parma, Petrarch formed another library which he designated as his "second Parnassus." Forced temporarily to remove his home to Venice, Petrarch again resumed his travels in the quest of books. It had been his habit to travel with literally bales of manuscripts, and when he came to leave Venice and break up the libraries there and at Parma, he decided to leave his precious manuscripts behind. He therefore offered them to Venice on condition that they should be properly cared for and never sold or divided. This was the nucleus of the famous Marciana Library.

Petrarch has been called the father of humanism because of his successful efforts in popularizing the Greek and Latin authors. The word "humanism" is not used in this connection in its philosophic sense but rather as Symonds uses it when he writes:

"The essence of humanism consisted in a new and vital perception of the dignity of man as a rational being, apart from theological determinations, and in the further perception that classic literature alone displayed human nature in the plenitude of intellectual and moral freedom. It was partly a reaction against ecclesiastic despotism,

partly an attempt to find the point of unity for all that had been thought and done by man, within the mind restored to consciousness of its own sovereign faculty. Hence the single-hearted devotion to the literature of Greece and Rome that marks the whole Renaissance era; hence the watchword of that age, the *Litterae Humaniores;* hence the passion for antiquity, possessing thoughtful men, and substituting a new authority for the traditions of the Church; hence the so-called Paganism of centuries bent upon absorbing and assimilating a spirit no less life-giving from their point of view than Christianity itself; hence the persistent effort of philosophers to find the meeting point of two divergent inspirations."

How Petrarch could have hoped to accomplish his revival without having visualized the printing press is difficult to comprehend, but the important fact remains that through his personal efforts and influence the recovery and preservation of classical manuscripts became almost a fetish. He himself collected the manuscripts of Cicero, thus continuing in his maturity the delight of his youth in reading aloud the writings of this, his favorite author. After his death, his followers pursued their quest with increasing zeal. Poggio Bracciolini, for instance, Apostolic Secretary in 1414, uncovered many lost treasures of Latin literature in France,

Germany, and Italy. In a letter to a friend, Poggio writes of his experiences at S. Gallen:

"I verily believe that if we had not come to the rescue, Quintilian must speedily have perished; for it cannot be imagined that a man magnificent, polished, elegant, urbane, and witty could much longer have endured the squalor of the prison house in which I found him. The books, you must know, were not housed according to their worth, but were lying in a most foul and obscure dungeon at the very bottom of a tower, a place into which condemned criminals would hardly have been thrust."

Other zealous literary crusaders, while relatively less successful in the number of manuscripts each recovered, ransacked the convent libraries of Italy, the museums of Constantinople, and the abbeys of France, Switzerland, and Germany to excellent purpose. Each new discovery was hailed by the ever-increasing band of humanists with joy and thanksgiving. "As Camillus was called the second founder of Rome," wrote Bruni to Poggio, "so may you receive the title of the second author of the works you have restored to the world."

Then came the invention of printing. It is easy to understand why the humanists should have welcomed the printing press as the most powerful ally they could possibly secure.

What John Gutenberg really discovered was not the art of printing from type, but rather the fact that individual types might be joined together to form words, and individual words so combined as to form sentences. As a matter of fact, the only thing he actually invented was the composing stick to hold the type in the hand after the letters were arranged in proper sequence. He devised the method of casting movable metal type, and improved the mechanism of the hand press (already in use for half a century in printing blocks) so that larger sheets could be worked.

Centuries before Gutenberg the Greeks and the Romans had printed from stamps, and the Koreans had even cut individual characters in metal. If any one of these peoples had possessed the wit to join these individual stamps into words, as Gutenberg did, printed books would have come into being several hundred years earlier. In that case, the art of printing would inevitably have found its way to Constantinople, and it is quite conceivable that the Renaissance should have applied itself to the East rather than to the West.

Curiously enough, John Gutenberg is a much more mysterious figure than many of his contemporaries who contributed less to the welfare of mankind. We know that he was born in 1397 or 1398 of a noble family of Mayence, his father,

Frilo Gutenberg, holding the position of Tax Receiver, or General Accountant, of that city. His youth was passed in the small village of Eltville, whence he went to Strassburg. Here, in 1440, he established himself in the manufacture of looking glasses, and was soon recognized by his neighbors as an inventive genius and a man of scientific attainments.

During his business association in Strassburg Gutenberg was hard pressed for money, and from the court records it is apparent that he found it much easier to borrow than to repay. It is by means of the accounts of the numerous litigations in which he became involved that we gain most of our authentic information. When his partners in Strassburg brought suit against Gutenberg to recover certain advances, the complaint states that he is believed to have devoted the borrowed money to experiments in " a certain art," and this art is supposed to refer to the art of printing.

By 1448 Gutenberg was back again in Mayence, and two years later he entered into his famous contract with John Fust, a wealthy goldsmith of that city. By this time Gutenberg was evidently prepared to disclose the nature of the invention upon which he had been engaged. Fust undertook to loan him 800 golden gulden at six per cent. interest, which sum Gutenberg agreed to use in estab-

lishing a printing office, pledging the contents of this workshop to his creditor by way of security. When the amount advanced proved too little to accomplish its purpose, Fust added an additional loan of 800 golden gulden.

The continuing delays caused Fust to become impatient, and in 1455 he brought suit against Gutenberg to recover his original advance. Gutenberg was without resources, and, in spite of his vigorous protests, this earliest established printing office passed out of his hands into those of Fust. Some say that Fust's motive in foreclosing was not highly altruistic — that Gutenberg had already demonstrated by the uncompleted work in his shop the importance and commercial value of his invention, and that Fust opportunely exercised his legal rights to secure fame and profits far beyond the meager six per cent. interest.

Working with Gutenberg in the printing office was a young artisan named Peter Schoeffer, of whom no details are recorded beyond his connection with this early adventure. Fust, perhaps in anticipation of his unfriendly litigation with Gutenberg, brought about Schoeffer's marriage with his daughter, Christina. Thus, having disposed of the inventor, the worthy (or unworthy) goldsmith provided himself with the practical association necessary to continue the work which

Gutenberg had begun, and the famous partnership of Fust and Schoeffer was established.

We may assume from the dates that the so-called *Gutenberg Bible* was well under way at the time the earlier partnership was dissolved, and that Gutenberg is entitled to the credit for its type, its presswork, and the general *format;* but there is no definite evidence to confirm this. The volumes bear no printer's signature, the date of 1456 being established only by a rubricator's note on a defective copy now at the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris. Gutenberg's name appears on no example of printing in existence.

When Gutenberg's *Bible* was produced in 1456, it was looked upon as an extraordinary mechanical achievement, but no one could have foreseen its full significance. The obstacles which at that time surrounded the printing of books must have seemed almost insurmountable. Each type letter had to be especially designed (based upon the hand letter of the scribe) and then cut in wood or metal. The compositor himself had to be taught how to combine the letters in his composing stick, struggling with the difficulties of maintaining regularity in the distance between the stems of the various characters, as required to produce a harmonious appearance upon the printed page. There were no iron chases, such as are used today, in which the

type is locked up and held rigid for the press, and the only method then known was to bore holes through the various type characters, through which a brass thread was run, and then tied as tightly as might be to hold the forme in place.

Fust and Schoeffer continued their business with success, while Gutenberg is said to have made unavailing efforts to reëstablish himself. In 1460 he became one of the equerries of Alphonsus II, Elector of Mayence, and he is supposed to have died in that city about 1468. A long controversy, intended to deprive the unfortunate Gutenberg of even the fruits of discovery, has been waged by bibliographers who have claimed that Laurence Koster, of Haarlem, was the real inventor of the art of printing. The preponderance of evidence, however, seems to show that Koster's books were printed from wooden blocks on which the letters were cut by hand, rather than from movable types, which form the basis of Gutenberg's discovery.

In spite of the advantage of priority gained by Fust and Schoeffer, and the other printing establishments which immediately sprang up in Germany, supremacy in the art of printing quickly passed to another country. Italy, in the last half of the fifteenth century, had become the home of learning and was the natural objective for workmen, who, having served their apprenticeships in

Germany, sought out the country where princes might reasonably be expected to become patrons of the new art, where manuscripts were already available for copy, and where the public was both able and willing to purchase the products of the press.

Credit for introducing the art into Italy, in 1464, is due to Juan Turrecremata, Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Scholastica, in Subiaco, a small hill town about thirty miles from Rome. Turrecremata became Abbot of Saint Scholastica in 1455. In the monastery at that time were several German monks, who, before leaving their home country, had learned of Gutenberg's discovery that movable letters might be placed together to form words, and words so combined as to form sentences, as put into practical operation by Fust and Schoeffer in Mayence. Through these monks, the learned Abbot became interested in the possibilities of the new art, and he made overtures to two German printers, Conrad Sweynheym of Mayence and Arnold Pannartz of Prague, to establish within the monastery what became the earliest printing office in Italy. These two printers are supposed to have been fugitives from Mayence after the siege of 1462, and they may even have been employed by Gutenberg himself. Sweynheym was a wood engraver by trade, so it is supposed that the responsi-

bility of cutting the characters and setting the type fell upon him, while Pannartz was the pressman. The monks did not contribute to the actual labor of printing, for that was against the rules of their organization, but to the editing and correction of the proofs.

From Subiaco the art of printing soon passed to Rome, but almost immediately Venice assumed preëminence. Venice was located in the direct highway between Germany and Italy over the Brenner Pass, and would thus be one of the first great cities a migrating printer would reach in his southern wanderings. Add to this the fact that paper was already a stable product of Italy, — being manufactured at Parma, Padua, Lucca, Pescia, and Fabriano, — and that Venice, because of the cheapness of sea transportation, was the best market in the world for the distribution of goods, and the attraction of this city to the early printers is fully apparent. To ensure the permanence of all these advantages, the government of the Republic, quick to recognize the importance of the new art, was farsighted enough to encourage its development, and to protect the Venetian printers in every possible way; although, as we shall see, their earliest action, except for an accident, would have been disastrous.

Thus, almost immediately after the so-called

" invention " of printing, Venice became the Mecca of printers and the center of the new art. The surprising fact about the preëminence of Venice in the art of printing is that the city can claim so little in the way of originality. The Venetian printers followed rather than led, but easily surpassed those who initiated. Printing was established in Subiaco and in Rome at an earlier date, yet, when once introduced into Venice, the art was practised there in over two hundred printing establishments — a greater number, perhaps, than in all the rest of Italy combined! It is said that no less than two million books were printed in Venice from 1470 to 1500. Rome preceded Venice in the introduction of illustration, and Milan in the use of Greek type — yet the most beautiful illustrated books, and the most perfect examples of Greek printing bear Venetian imprints.

The first printer in Venice was John of Spires. Little is known of Da Spira beyond the fact that he came from the town of Speyer, in Rhenish Bavaria. There is no record to show how long he had lived in Venice before he began to issue books, but John of Spires, on September 18, 1469, received from the Senate of Venice the extraordinary privilege of being the only printer permitted to exercise his art within the jurisdiction of the city for a period of five years. This is the earliest action,

already referred to, which might have proved disastrous. As a matter of fact, John of Spires enjoyed this sweeping monopoly only a few months, for the extraordinary privilege conferred was automatically canceled by his death in 1470. Had he lived, such printers as Nicolas Jenson, John of Cologne, Christopher Valdarfer, and Franz Renner would have been excluded from establishing themselves in Venice, and would undoubtedly have practised their art in other cities, to the distinct loss of glory to the Venetian Republic.

The monopoly of John of Spires ending with his death, it became possible for Nicolas Jenson, a Frenchman, to set up the second printing establishment in Venice in 1470. Nicolas was the son of Jacob Jenson of Sommevoire, in the diocese of Troyes. He served an apprenticeship in the Paris mint, and was promoted to be the master of the mint at Tours. In 1458, Nicolas Jenson was sent to Mayence by King Charles VII of France to find out what sort of thing this new art of printing really was, and, if of value to France, to learn the secrets and to take them home. After mastering the art at Mayence, Jenson was prepared to introduce it in Paris; but by this time Charles VII had died, and Jenson knew that Louis XI, the new monarch, would have little interest in recognizing his father's mandate. The Frenchman then set himself up in

Venice, where he contributed largely to the prestige gained by that city as a center for printing as an art, and for scholarly publications.

Jenson's residence in Venice was in the parish of San Canciano, and his printing office was located at San Salvador. Here he is said to have devised the scheme of locking the pages of type in iron chases (just as is the practice of the modern printer) instead of fastening the individual characters together by passing a brass thread though holes bored in their center — the method which the earliest printers found so troublesome and awkward.

The great contribution of Jenson to the art of printing was his superb Roman font, based upon the writing of the humanistic scribes — the best handlettering of the day. For the first time, in translating each letter into metal, a type designer reproduced it not as the scribe actually wrote it but as he intended to write it.

Jenson died a rich and honored man. While Sixtus IV was Pope, Nicolas was summoned to Rome, where the title of Count Palatine was conferred upon him in recognition of his services to the Church in the publication of his devotional and canonical works in 1473 and 1474. In his will, Jenson asked to be buried in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, located on a small island of the Lagoon between S. Giorgio Maggiore and S.

Clemente. The church has long since been destroyed. The will also discloses the fact that Jenson left three daughters and a son, Nicolas, who was in London at the time of his father's death. Jenson's brother Albert was the executor of his estate.

Another important figure in Venetian printing was Erhardus Ratdolt, who came from Augsburg and issued volumes in Venice from 1476 to 1485. Associated with him during the first three years were Bernard Pictor, also from Augsburg, and Peter Loslein of Langenzoon. During its brief existence, this famous partnership produced volumes noteworthy for the beauty of their decorations. Ratdolt may be said to have introduced illustrated books into Venice, even though a few isolated cases exist of earlier illustrated volumes. Several Venetian books printed in 1470–1472 have woodcut backgrounds over which illumination has been put on by hand; but with the advent of Ratdolt this practice almost entirely ceased.

After Ratdolt and until Aldus much of the printing in Venice was of mediocre quality. One of the extraordinary facts in the history of the Book is that so large a number of printing establishments sprang almost immediately into existence. For a time the volumes were of remarkable beauty in conception and of high excellence in execution. The invention of printing from type was looked

upon by the early printers as supplying a new method of conveying the thought of the author to the reader, and they accepted the handwritten manuscripts not only as their models but as their rivals. In fact, they tried to make the printed page resemble the manuscript as closely as possible. Gradually, however, a market developed for cheaper books, which destroyed the incentive the printers previously had to keep the standard of their work high. The great printers still held to their ideals and issued wide-margin copies for their fastidious patrons, but the majority, during this period, made little attempt to maintain the high quality of their predecessors.

Among the forerunners of Aldus there is another printer whose work was epoch-making in the history of the Book. William Caxton was born in the Weald of Kent about 1422, and he died in London seventy years later. He first demonstrated his character and executive ability in Bruges, with which city he associated himself when about twenty years of age, and by 1462 he was the best known Englishman in all the dominions of Burgundy. Princess Margaret of England, a sister of King Edward IV, later married to Charles the Bold, became much interested in Caxton, and soon after coming to Bruges she persuaded him to abandon his mercantile associations and the high position

he held as governor of the English merchants to enter her personal service.

In his new position Caxton found the opportunity to devote himself to literary work, and in 1467 he began to translate the *Histories of Troy*. When this was completed, four years later, he presented a manuscript copy to his patroness, and her delight with his work gave him such a high reputation that the scribes could not work fast enough to supply the demand for duplicate handwritten copies. It was because of the limitations in reproducing manuscript books that William Caxton first became interested in the new invention of printing. Colard Mansion had already practised the new art in Bruges, so Caxton was not the pioneer. The Englishman, however, was in a position both intellectually and financially to carry on the practice of the art of printing much more successfully than the impecunious Mansion. He paid a visit to Cologne in 1471 and carefully studied the equipment and the work being done at the Zell Press. Sometimes in connection with Mansion, sometimes by himself, he produced several interesting volumes before he returned to London in 1476, and gained everlasting fame by being the first to introduce the art of printing into England.

Caxton's work does not compare in quality with the Italian examples which were produced during

the same period, but his volumes accomplished much in nationalizing the language in which they were printed. Up to that time there were in England many confusing variants. This was all very well so long as the national literature found vernacular expression in the songs of minstrels and the tales of professional story tellers; but when any language takes on a printed form, some one of the variants has to be selected, and the very selection is bound to create a standard. Caxton's publications established the English language.

II · ALDUS MANUTIUS

The Evolution of the Printed Book

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The great figure in the whole history of the Book is Aldus Manutius, whose claim to fame comes not only from his work as a printer, but also from the profound effect of his scholarship upon the learning of the world, and his successful efforts to preserve the Greek classics to posterity. He was born at Bassiano, a small town in the Romagna, in 1447, his baptismal name being Teobaldo, from which came the abbreviated, Latinized form by which he will always be known. The Manucci were a noble Tuscan family.

The young Aldus, as a student, early showed a distinct tendency toward learning, and at Rome and Ferrara he distinguished himself, particularly in the classics. Having mastered Latin, he studied Greek under the famous Guarini of Turin. At Ferrara, he formed a devoted friendship with a brilliant fellow student, Pico della Mirandola, Prince of Carpi, from which association may be directly traced his later steps in life. It was through

this friend's influence that, when Aldus completed his studies at Ferrara, he became tutor to the two young sons of Pico's sister at Carpi; it was from meeting at Carpi the accomplished Greek scholar Adramyttenos, a refugee from Constantinople, that the full beauty of the Greek language burst upon him; it was from his work in instructing his youthful charges in Greek from manuscript textbooks that he received his vision of what it would mean to the scholarship of the world if these same manuscript classics might be multiplied by means of the new invention of printing; it was through the sympathetic and financial assistance of the Princess of Carpi that he received his backing when he established himself in Venice, to translate his vision into practical expression.

Beyond all this, the years at Carpi developed Aldus into an all-round, cultured gentleman. The atmosphere in which he lived was so charged with appreciation of the beautiful that life unfolded in such a way as to make upon him an indelible impression. Aldus was included as a member of the Princess' charming family. Caterina Pia, herself a student, kept in close touch with the education of her sons, and the letters which passed between her and the young tutor during these eventful months, are, on both sides, full of sane philosophy, sage counsel, and the essence of worth-while liv-

ing. The young princes were devoted to their tutor. Albert, the elder, referred to him as "my most excellent and most beloved preceptor and master," while Leonello always called him "father."

Pico della Mirandola spent much of his later life in Florence, but the close friendship between him and Aldus was kept alive by a correspondence which discloses the nature of their relations:

"I send you," the Prince writes in 1491, "later than I could have wished, the *Homer* for which you asked. But, my dear Aldus, I am so much absorbed by my work that I have scarcely time to breathe. For a long time, as you know, I have given myself wholly to literature, which has so imposed upon me the obligation of reading and discussion that my health resents it. You say that you are about to apply yourself to philosophy. Remember that this should be done only with this understanding: philosophy should never separate us from the truth of that which is mysterious. Philosophy seeks truth, theology finds it, religion absorbs it."

While the tutor was under the influence of these surroundings, examples of the new art of printing fell into Aldus' hands — volumes printed perhaps by John of Spires or Nicolas Jenson in Venice. They came to him as a direct message, almost as a command, to abandon his happy environment and, during his remaining years, to apply his scholar-

ship and experience to extending the world's horizon of learning through the now accessible medium of the printed book. "I have resolved," Aldus wrote, "to devote my life to the cause of scholarship. I have chosen, in place of a life of ease and freedom, an anxious and toilsome career. A man has higher responsibilities than the seeking of his own enjoyment; he should devote himself to honorable labor. Living that is a mere existence may be left to men who are content to be animals. Cato compared human existence to iron: when nothing is done with it, it rusts; it is only through constant activity that polish or brilliancy is secured."

Aldus at once outlined his vision to the Princess of Carpi, and he found in her a regretful but a sympathetic listener. After all these years, it was a wrench for both of them to terminate the delightful relations which had always existed; but the young princes had grown up, and Aldus had really completed his work at Carpi. So the Princess encouraged him to proceed with his ambitious plans, and promptly offered to supply him with a modest financial background, to which her brother Pico and her two sons later generously contributed. That Aldus fully realized his obligation is shown in a letter, written years later to a friend who asked for a discount on an order for books: "I cannot

give you these at a reduced price, because they belong to me in common with several other persons."

The Princess and Aldus discussed the details, and the plans rapidly matured. It was important for the embryo printer to place himself where manuscripts were most available, and where he could receive capable editorial assistance. This made the selection of Venice inevitable. Starting with the notable collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts which Cardinal Bessarion had bequeathed to the Venetian Republic on his death in 1474, no city was richer in potential material. Venice was also the center of a large Greek colony, including many who were well educated and fully competent to assist Aldus in his ambitious undertaking. It was in Venice, therefore, that Aldus settled, about 1488.

Aldus approached the art of printing with seriousness and with a full comprehension of the difficulties involved. There were the type letters to be designed and cut, the compositors to be taught, the editors and correctors to be assembled, the manuscripts to be selected, and last, but by no means least, provision to be made for the sale of his volumes. It required much courage for the young tutor voluntarily to abandon his delightful surroundings, and to embark upon a career in an

almost untried field, obviously full of pitfalls, and demanding for success much beyond the scholarship and enthusiasm which were his undoubted assets.

In those early days a printer expressed himself in the design of his type as much as in the quality of his workmanship. Aldus was not content simply to copy what other printers before him had done. His Roman face, it is true, was based upon the same handlettering as Jenson's, but he introduced originality by cutting small capitals to use with it, which no one else had ever thought of doing. Then it occurred to Aldus that the inclined, cursive handwriting of Petrarch would make an excellent type, so he had it translated into metal, and called it "*Italic.*"

The art of printing, as such, would never have appealed to Aldus if it had not offered him an opportunity to produce his beloved classics. Several of the great Latin authors had already been printed, but at this time Greek books had been issued in only four places: in Milan in 1476, in Vincenza in 1483, in Venice in 1484, and in Florence in 1488. Æsop, Theocritus, Homer, and Isocrates were the only Greek classics which had ever been printed in the original; and even these were composed in Greek type which was incomplete in the matter of capitals, breathings, and accents.

Of his predecessors, Sweynheym and Pannartz, Vindelin of Spires, Nicolas Jenson, and Erhardus Ratdolt had introduced Greek characters in their books, but none except Bartolomeo di Libri and Leonicus Cretensis had attempted to print a complete book in Greek. Aldus felt that he had a clear field before him, and he settled down to prepare himself to embrace his opportunity.

Gradually the Aldine Press began to shape itself. Aldus established himself in the old Campo S. Paternian, now the Piazza Manin, in Venice, near the church of S. Agostino. Here he set up his presses, organized his business, gathered together his staff, and made his home. Besides casting his own type, Aldus had to manufacture much of his material — the printing ink, for instance, being made upon the premises. Most of his paper came from the famous Fabriano mill, which is still in existence — " hand linen (so the old records run), made of pure linen and hempen rags beated in pieces by dint of wood, and made stiff with glue got from boiled hides." At its height, the Aldine Press, including Aldus' family, housed thirty-three souls, embracing the editors, the proof-readers, the compositors, and the pressmen. True to his ideals, Aldus permitted no word to be spoken within the limits of the establishment except in the Greek tongue.

As against its many advantages for a printer, Venice presented one serious handicap — it had no university. In other cities the early printers drew freely upon the professors for editorial assistance, and depended upon the universities to absorb a considerable number of printed volumes. Aldus was forced to retain learned editors upon his staff, and to summon them from distant places.

The personnel naturally changed from time to time. His chief compositor, fellow editor, friend, and most important collaborator was Marcus Musurus, a Cretan. Musurus was also a friend of Pico della Mirandola, and Aldus had first met him at Carpi. His labors were of the greatest value to the over-worked head of the Aldine establishment, and Aldus always recognized his debt of gratitude. In 1502, upon the recommendation of Aldus, Musurus was asked by the Venetian Senate to occupy the chair of *belles lettres* at the University of Padua, where his lectures, repeated in Venice, attracted wide attention. "Scholars hasten to Venice, the Athens of our day," wrote Aldus, "to listen to the teachings of Musurus, the greatest scholar of the age." It was from the handwriting of Musurus that Aldus took the design for his Greek characters.

The chief corrector for the Greek proof was John Gregoropoulos, of Candia. Theodore Gaza,

from Athens, was numbered among the most useful editors Aldus had. Johann Reuchlin, the famous scholar of Heidelberg; Hieronymus Aleander and Pietro Bembo, both of whom later became Cardinals; Scipio Carteromachus, and the great Erasmus of Rotterdam, were proud to be numbered among his associates and advisors. Erasmus put through the press the Aldine editions of *Terence*, *Seneca*, Plutarch's *Morals*, and *Plautus*, while Gaza devoted himself chiefly to the great five-volume *Aristotle*. Erasmus is said to have made himself unpopular with the loyal Musurus by criticizing the meager table set by the financially harassed Aldus. The Cretan retorted by remarking that Erasmus "drank enough for the triple-bodied Geryon, and did the work of only half a man."

Aldus enjoyed a long friendship with Johann Reuchlin, who became the founder of Greek studies in Germany. In acknowledging a letter from him, Aldus writes in 1502: "I can scarcely express my gratification at your friendly words concerning the importance and the value of my publishing undertakings. It is no light thing to secure the commendation of one of the greatest scholars of his time. If my life is spared to me, I hope more to deserve the praise that you give me for service rendered to the scholarship and enlightenment of the age."

The greatest obstacle encountered by Aldus in preparing for his Greek publications was the lack of Greek lexicons and grammars. It was obvious that these had to be written and printed before editors could prepare the copy for the compositors, and before the correctors could revise the proof after the copy had been put in type. About 1480 a Greek refugee named Constantine Lascaris had compiled the first Greek lexicon ever issued, published in Milan, which stands as the first work of a living writer printed in Italy. Aldus found this to be hopelessly inadequate, but he made of it an excellent basis for a revision the author now undertook, under his supervision. This was the first book printed at the Aldine Press. Then Aldus called upon Gaza to prepare a Greek grammar, and this was issued during the following year. Undismayed by the manifold duties which overwhelmed him, Aldus himself prepared a Greek-Latin dictionary that immediately became the standard. It passed through many editions, and was honored by being pirated by the Giunta, famous printer-publishers in Florence, who even copied the famous Aldine mark of the Dolphin and Anchor.

The patience and restraint of Aldus during these five tedious years of preparation show the character of the man. Other printers might issue texts filled with errors, using incomplete fonts of Greek

type, but not Aldus. He tested out his material with Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* in 1494, but his first real example of what he could do was the great *Aristotle* in five volumes, which appeared during the years 1495–1498. As an expression of affection, Aldus dedicated this splendid work to his former pupil, Albert of Carpi.

Aldus came into the story of the Book at exactly the right time. We have noted how much the world owes to Italy for the spontaneous and extraordinary evolution of the printed book in the fifteenth century. We have seen how Venice quickly became the center of the new art, but it is even more important still to understand that it was the happy coöperation of the entire country that produced the final result. The humanists were scattered all over Italy, and dominated the intellectual life of the period: in Florence they were devoting their energies to discovering manuscripts, founding libraries, and encouraging the study of the Greek language; in Naples they elevated the standard of learning by their constructive criticism; in Rome they brought learning nearer to the people by accurate translations; in Mantua and Ferrara a definite system of education was begun; in Venice the results of all this labor were made permanent, being given to the world in printed form.

Thus it is to Italy as a whole rather than to any

single Italian city that the gratitude of the world is due for the benefaction of the Book. The contribution in each center was vital, but it was the splendid coördination of all that regained the culture of antiquity, classified and interpreted it, and then turned it over in its entirety to all Europe. No finer instance could be found to exemplify the humanistic creed we have already studied: "to hold oneself open to receive truth unprejudiced as to its source; and, having received truth, *to give it out again*, made richer by one's personal interpretation."

There was no more ardent humanist than Aldus. He appreciated to the full the service his fellow humanists of the preceding century had rendered to the world by preserving the classical manuscripts. His was to be the privilege of giving these precious gems of thought an eternal permanency. He pondered over the sudden antagonism exhibited by the great Italian princes to the development of the new art, and quickly sensed its true significance. He watched an intellectually shackled people awake to the astonishing realization that these gems of thought, hitherto available only to the wealthy overlords, were now within their reach. It was an amazing revelation, and the spontaneous response on the part of the masses was so enthusiastic that it became terrifying to those who had

previously counted upon their ignorance as essential to easy government. The man in the street, hitherto compelled to study argument merely by means of pictorial design, was now able to make himself as familiar with the vital problems of the day as those who had considered themselves his masters; and with this new knowledge came a self-reliance which the princes knew would eventually destroy their prestige and power.

Aldus made application to the Venetian government for protection in the publication of his Greek volumes, and, when a monopoly for twenty years was granted, this became the first copyright in history. Just how valuable this concession was, and how it operated, is difficult to understand, as we find other printers, such as Calliergi, issuing Greek volumes in Venice long before the expiration of this period.

In his *Aristotle* Aldus demonstrated the ability of the press to produce a machine-made book of sufficient attractiveness to compete against the written volume. Other volumes, such as the *Plato*, were even more beautiful, and some were deemed worthy of being embellished by the art of the illuminator. Aldus might easily have curried favor with the princes and wealthy collectors by confining himself wholly to expensive publications, but this would have been in direct violation of his

vision and a prostitution of his purpose in coming to Venice. He never wavered in his determination to produce volumes in Latin, Greek, and Italian — well-made, but at so low a cost that any one could purchase. " I will never desist from my undertaking until I have performed what I have promised," he declared, " always unmindful of expense, however great, and equally regardless of labor, even were I to live in ease and affluence."

The first volume in the Aldine classics was the *Bucolics* of Virgil, issued in 1501 at a price of about fifty cents a volume. This was promptly followed by a long list of Latin and Italian authors. The Greek series opened with the *Sophocles* of 1502. These were set in the first Italic type ever cut.

It was a curious and happy turn of the wheel that brought about the use of this newly cut type, based upon the handwriting of the Father of Humanism, in the Aldine classics, which were destined to fulfil Petrarch's fondest dreams for the preservation and dissemination of the humanities!

The type was cut for Aldus by Francesco da Bologna, of the celebrated Griffo family. The small, compact form of this design found immediate favor. Its condensed nature enabled the printer to compress his subject matter into a smaller number of pages, and thus reduce the cost. This led Aldus to drop the quarto *format,* and to issue his

volumes in octavo size, which innovation immediately proved so popular as to create a revolution in bookmaking. The smaller volumes could be carried in the pocket, were cheaper, and were more available for everyday use. Aldus was granted a monopoly in Venice for ten years on all books issued in this form.

Few realize how immensely popular the Italic face became in the sixteenth century. In Italy, France, and even in England this cursive design became the fashionable vernacular type, and it was used in volume after volume. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tide again turned toward the Roman face, the Italic being used only for emphasis or for proper names.

Eager to make the most of his monopoly in Greek publications, Aldus pushed the work forward with hectic enthusiasm, the editors and the correctors working on the copy at the same time that the earlier formes were being printed on the press. In those days, no printer had sufficient type to set up a whole volume at a time. As soon as enough type was composed to constitute a forme of four or eight pages, it was run off on the hand press. Then the type was distributed, reset, and the procedure was repeated.

"My days and nights are devoted to the preparation of material," Aldus writes. "I can scarcely

take food or strengthen my stomach owing to the multiplicity and pressure of business. With both hands occupied, and surrounded by pressmen who are clamorous for work, there is scarcely time even to blow my nose."

As a result of this haste many of these early volumes were set up directly from the original manuscripts. When one realizes that Homer was the only great Greek author who had been issued in printed form prior to Aldus, and recalls that Aldus gave to the world for the first time printed editions of Aristotle, Plato, Thucydides, Xenophon, Herodotus, Aristophanes, Euripides, Sophocles, Demosthenes, Lysias, Æchines, Plutarch, and Pindar, he may appreciate the stupendous contribution made by this great printer to scholarship. And except for the effort of Petrarch in the fourteenth century, and his fellow humanists in the fifteenth, many of these manuscripts would have been irrevocably lost before Aldus had the opportunity to multiply them!

The publications of Aldus include about one hundred titles issued during twenty years in about two hundred and fifty volumes. Taking into account the difficulties presented by the fact that the art of printing was still in its infancy; that each of these titles was produced from manuscript copy; and that from 1509 to 1511 Venice was so har-

assed by war that business was almost at a standstill, Aldus may be credited with the most tremendous and important accomplishment in the whole history of publishing.

Aldus felt the lack of inspiration which would have come from intellectual contact with university surroundings, so with characteristic energy he undertook to supply this signal lack in the completeness of Venetian life. This, in 1550, took the form of the *Ne-accademia Nostra* — an Academy which should be to Venice what the famous institution established by the Medici had been to Florence. The special object of this organization was to assimilate the knowledge of the classical literature of Greece, and to become more familiar with it. One of the basic rules of the Academy was that the members must speak nothing but Greek among themselves, or submit to a fine. When the sum thus collected was sufficient, the members indulged in a banquet. Aldus himself was the first president of the organization, and the members included readers and correctors of the Aldine Press, priests and doctors, the cultured nobility of Venice, Padua, Rome, Bologna, and Lucca, Greek scholars from Candia, and even the great Erasmus from Rotterdam.

The Academy proved useful and stimulating to Aldus. On certain fixed days the members ex-

amined new Greek manuscripts and passed judgment on the desirability of their publication, taking as their measuring stick the service such texts might render to scholarship. In a way, this was a revival of the Academy founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus in 300 B.C., and a more recent parallel would be the functions exercised by the Delegates of the Clarendon Press of Oxford, England. Aldus had hoped that the Venetian Academy would assume greater responsibilities by exercising its influence upon arts and sciences in general, and had the life of the indefatigable founder been longer spared, his ambition might have been gratified.

A letter written by Lorenzo of Pavia in 1501 to Isabella d'Este, Marchesa di Mantora, gives an interesting glance into the business of the Aldine Press at that time. The Marchesa was a cultured noblewoman, who took particular interest in the work of Aldus. Seeking to secure examples of his work, she commissioned Lorenzo to secure them for her, and this letter, freely translated, is a report of his experiences in fulfilling his commission:

" You have expressed the desire, illustrious lady, to obtain large-paper copies of *Virgil*, *Petrarch*, and *Ovid*. At this moment the *Virgil* is the only one I can secure, and I send it to you. The *Petrarch*

is not yet completed, but it will be finished in ten days. The delay is due to a lack of the fine paper — it has been with difficulty that they secured the small amount required for the *Virgil*. Your copy of the *Petrarch* will be selected sheet by sheet, so that you shall have the most beautiful of all the copies. This is the more assured because this volume is issued by Aldus in collaboration with Pietro Bembo, who is wholly devoted to Your Ladyship. It is Bembo who secured the manuscript, which Petrarch had written with his own hand, as a pattern for the types. I have actually held this manuscript in my hands! It belonged to a Paduan, who copied each letter with such care that the type exactly matches the written characters. I will send the volume to you as soon as it is printed. Aldus and Bembo wish the first copy to be yours. They say that this will be for them the best of auguries.

" Immediately after the *Petrarch* they will print the *Dante*, and after that, the *Ovid*, which will be begun, I think, about the end of September; but the *Dante* will be started within twenty days. I have been asked to look about for some good hempen paper, of high quality and pure white, not too thick in one spot and too thin in another. The difficulty is to find paper of good enough quality. They tell me that the price of the *Virgil* and *Petrarch* will be not less than five ducats each."

Aldus considered the matter of the sale and distribution of his books his most serious business problem. Bookselling as an organized trade was unknown prior to 1550, and the printer-publisher of the fifteenth century was largely dependent upon personal correspondence with scholars who were interested to purchase his product. In those days, as now, the real business of books was hampered by casual and insincere flutterers around the flame of learning. Aldus had no patience with such as these:

" Nearly every hour," he writes, " comes a letter from some scholar, and if I undertook to reply to them all, I should be obliged to devote day and night to correspondence. Then, through the day, come calls from all kinds of visitors. Some wish merely to give a word of greeting; others want to know what there is that is new; while the greater number come to my office because they happen to have nothing else to do. ' Let us look in upon Aldus,' they say to one another. Then they loaf about and chatter to no purpose. Even these people with no business are not so bad as those who have a poem or something in prose (usually very prosy indeed) which they wish to see printed with the name of Aldus. These interruptions are now becoming too serious for me, and I must take steps to lessen them. Many letters I simply leave unanswered,

while to others I send very brief replies; and as I do this not from pride or from discourtesy, but simply in order to be able to go on with my task of printing good books, it must not be taken unkindly. . . As a warning to the heedless visitors who use up my business hours to no purpose, I have now placed a great notice on the door of my office to the following effect: 'Whoever thou art, thou art earnestly requested by Aldus to state thy business briefly and to take thy departure promptly. In this way thou mayst be of service, even as was Hercules to the weary Atlas. For this is a place of work for all who may enter.'"

There was another side to this correspondence which must have been gratifying to the busy printer. Purchasers of books looked upon Aldus as a benefactor of mankind, and freely expressed their appreciation of the privilege of buying. Urbanus, for instance, a highly educated monk, wrote Aldus in 1505: "May the blessing of the Lord rest upon thee, thou illustrious man. The high reward in which you are held by our Brotherhood will be realized by you when you learn that we have ordered (through the House of Függer in Augsburg) a group of your valuable publications, and that it is our chief desire to be able to purchase all the others. We pray to God each day that He will in His mercy long preserve your life for the cause

of good learning. Our neighbor, Mutianus Rufus, the learned Canonicus of Gotha, calls you 'the light of our age,' and is never weary of relating your great services to scholarship. He sends you a cordial greeting, as does also Magister Spalatinus, a man of great learning. We are sending you with this four gold ducats, and will ask you to send us (through Függer) an *Etymologicum Magnum* and a *Julius Pollux*, and also (if there be money sufficient) the writings of Bessarion, of Xenophon, and of Hierocles, and the *Letters* of Merula."

There were other rewards that came to the overburdened Aldus. "I cannot tell you what joy I experienced," he wrote a friend, "when I learned that in the great city of Brescia the most distinguished men were devoting themselves passionately to Greek literature. This truly surpasses all that I hoped when I undertook the publication of Greek texts. This passion has increased, day by day, while arms have contended against books, not only in Italy, but in Germany, in France, in Pannonia, in England, in Spain, and wherever the Latin tongue is known. My joy makes me forget my fatigue, and my ardor is redoubled to come more and more to the aid of all students, and especially of the youth born at this period of the renaissance of letters."

The reference made by Aldus of "arms con-

tending against books" recalls the frequent interruptions caused by the wars of 1500, 1506, 1510, and 1511, in which Venice was directly involved. During these periods the universities north of the Alps had to discontinue their classical instruction because soldiers in the passes prevented the Aldine classical texts from being transported from Venice to their destination.

The piratical reprints of the Aldine volumes annoyed Aldus even more than the wars. The copyrights secured from the Venetian government gave protection only within the limits of Venice itself. The printers of Paris were guilty of this piracy to some extent, but those of Lyons, particularly the famous house of Giunta, were the chief offenders. Aldus would not have minded so much the filching of the text, but when the unscrupulous printers ventured to copy his types and his original style of typography, and sold their counterfeit copies as the product of the Aldine Press, his indignation knew no bounds. "These fraudulent volumes, printed and sold under my name," he declares, "prejudice friends of letters to my sorrow and discredit. The paper is inferior, and even has a foul odor; the type characters are defective, and the consonants do not align with the vowels. It is by their imperfections that you may distinguish them."

No printer's mark is better known than the famous Anchor and Dolphin of Aldus. Its origin goes back to the medals of imperialistic Rome struck for Vespasian and for Domitian. Pietro Bembo presented one of these medals to Aldus, who adopted the device, adding the words *Festina lente*, which he found in Augustus. The dolphin stands for speed in execution, and the anchor for firmness in deliberation. Sir Thomas Browne translates the slogan, "Celerity contempered with cunctation."

The most important rival of Aldus in Venice was the establishment formed by Nicolas Blastus and Zacharias Calliergi, devoted exclusively to the production of Greek volumes. Both these men were Cretans, Blastus being a man of wealth and culture, while Calliergi was a printer. The partnership was an expression of national pride: exiled from Greece, these patriotic sons endeavored to keep alive interest in Greek literature. In spite of the rivalry, the relations between this Press and Aldus were not only friendly but intimate. Aldus saw in the work of Calliergi a real contribution to Greek learning, and he welcomed the competition. Marcus Musurus, the chief associate of Aldus in the Aldine Press, was also a Cretan, and between him and Blastus existed the closest friendship. Aldus went so far as to include the Calliergi vol-

umes in his catalogue, offering them for sale side by side with his own.

The extent to which the Cretan national pride carried these exiles is shown by the impassioned appeal, written by Marcus Musurus, which appears at the beginning of the *Etymologicum* printed by Calliergi in 1499: "Let no one be astonished at the spirit of the Cretans," he declares, "since it was Minerva herself who, at the command of Jupiter, taught the Cretans the beauties of the art of printing. It was a Cretan who cut these punches; it was a Cretan who devised the accents, and a Cretan who joined them to the letters. It was a Cretan who cast this font of letters in lead; it was a Cretan, whose name is synonymous with victory (Nicolas), who bore the expense of this volume; and he who now celebrates its glory is a Cretan."

Marcus Musurus and Nicolas Blastus were voluminous correspondents, and frequently the subjects discussed were of present interest. Musurus shared Aldus' disgust of those booklovers who declined to loan him their precious manuscripts to be used as copy at the Aldine Press. In one of his letters Musurus writes:

"The lack of books, my very dear Nicolas, is a great misfortune for every one, and particularly for those who burn with a desire for self- instruc-

tion and are unable to procure books because of their lack of means. This is the fault of the manuscript collectors, who accept self-praise and glory from their possession, and keep them for themselves alone, depriving others of the fame and glory which would come through their use."

Aldus married Maria, the daughter of an earlier Venetian printer, Andrea de Torresani, in 1498, and became the father of three sons and a daughter. Manutius, the eldest, became a priest at Arola, Antoninus was a librarian at Bologna, while Paulus entered the Aldine Press. Alda, the daughter, was educated in a convent at Carpi, and in his will her father bequeathed her 300 ducats if she remained with the Sisters, and 600 ducats if she married. She chose the latter alternative, and became the wife of a Mantuan named Cato.

At the time of Aldus' death, Paulus was too young to assume charge of the business, so Andrea de Torresani combined his own printing establishment with the Aldine Press. Previously, Andrea had purchased the type and presses which Nicolas Jenson had left, so the consolidation brought added historic luster to the already world-famous plant of Aldus. Working with Andrea were his two sons, Francesco and Ferderico.

It was during this period that Jean Grolier became interested in the Aldine Press. From this

association Grolier became an outstanding figure in the world of books in Italy and later in France. He succeeded his father as Treasurer of the Duchy of Milan in 1510, when thirty-one years old. Having already developed a passionate and an understanding love for books, he sought out the famous establishment of Aldus and became acquainted with the great scholar-printer. Later, Grolier came to know Andrea de Torresani, and formed a warm friendship with Francesco. He became the patron of the Press, sending manuscripts to be printed, loaning money at eventful crises, and in general fulfilling the rôle of good angel. As a result, many of the Aldine publications are dedicated to Grolier, and one copy of every book was especially printed on vellum for this fastidious collector.

In a letter Grolier wrote to Francesco, when sending him the manuscript of Budeus' *De Asse* for publication, the Frenchman gives instructions which reveal his familiarity with the basic principles of good bookmaking:

"You will care with all diligence," he writes, "O most beloved Francesco, that this work, when it leaves your printing shop to pass into the hands of learned men, may be as correct as it is possible to render it. I heartily beg and beseech this of you. The book, too, should be decent and elegant; and to this will contribute the choice of the paper, the

excellence of the type, which should have been but little used, and the width of the margins. To speak more exactly, I should wish it were set up with the same type with which you printed your *Poliziano*. And if this decency and elegance shall increase your expenses, I will refund you entirely. Lastly, I should wish that nothing be added to the original or taken from it."

Grolier is perhaps better known from his bindings than from his association with the printing of books. The famous inscription IO. GROLIERII ET AMICORUM, stamped on the covers of his volumes, expresses this booklover's understanding of what a book should be — not a treasure to be acquired and hoarded, but a joy to be shared with others. In his library of some eight thousand books Grolier had several copies of the same title, so that no one of his friends need be deprived of the pleasure which he himself secured. "You will owe nothing to books," Erasmus wrote Grolier, "but in the future, books will give you an eternal glory."

Paulus Manutius assumed charge of the Aldine Press when he was eighteen years old, but he was unable to combine, as his father had, his undoubted scholarly attainments with the business necessities. Paulus was particularly interested in Cicero, and devoted his lifetime to preparing *Commentaries* to this author's works, which were

published after his death. Paulus was in poor health during most of the years he struggled with the problems of the Aldine Press, and later at Rome. In 1570, he writes pathetically to his son Aldus, "Scholarship and industry have never brought me rest or fortune. I pray God that you may be better favored." But the younger Aldus had no yearning for his grandfather's honors. Gradually the affairs of the Press ran down, and it passed out of existence at the close of the sixteenth century.

The death of the great Aldus occurred on February 6, 1515, while he was in his sixty-eighth year. Measured by human standards, in spite of the fact that he died a poor man, the sum total of his accomplishments seems incredible; yet Aldus himself considered his labors wholly incomplete. Gutenberg had conceived the idea of printing books, and had proved it practical. Fust and Schoeffer, Sweynheym and Pannartz, John of Spires, Nicolas Jenson, and Erhardus Ratdolt had each in his turn contributed to what had gone before, and thus prepared the way for Aldus; but no one of these great figures had visualized the relation which the new invention bore to learning or to the civilization of the world. They were satisfied if their books compared favorably with the manuscripts they imitated, and found a limited sale among the

wealthy book collectors and well-to-do students and professors. Aldus, assuming that quality was an inherent element of bookmaking, sought, in the selection of his titles, and in the low price of his volumes, to make knowledge universal. His books were but the vehicles conveying wisdom to those who craved it. To Aldus, each author remained a prisoner so long as he existed only in manuscript form, and in multiplying the classics so that all the world might read, the great printer felt himself nothing less than a liberator of faithful souls in bondage.

The great contemporaries of Aldus combined at his death to do him honor. Musurus, Reuchlin, and Erasmus declared that he had accomplished more for the spread of learning and for the development of literature than all the scholars of his period. His fellow printers acknowledged without question his supremacy as a master artist-printer. No one can again contribute so much to the external and internal advancement of the Book because that much is not now left undone. Even as a pioneer, he established so high a standard that no one has surpassed his work, even with the aid of modern mechanical improvements — and it is a question whether any printer has yet equaled the quality and taste shown in the Aldine masterpieces.

Raphaël Regio, professor of the humanities in Venice at the time, delivered the funeral oration over the body of Aldus lying in state in the old Church of S. Paternian. The casket rested on a catafalque banked high with choice editions of the volumes he had created. These tangible evidences of the devotion of a lifetime form the ever-living monument to the continuing benefaction of his greatness.

When Aldus knew that his end was near he drew up his will, which in itself is an extraordinary human document. One of his requests was that his mortal remains be taken back to Carpi, that he might finally rest among the beloved scenes of his youth, which in his maturity he so often and so happily recalled.

III · ROBERT ÉTIENNE AND GEOFFROI TORY

The Printed Book Freed from the Limitations of the Manuscript Volume

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Nearly a century was required to enable the printed book to free itself from the limitations of the manuscript volume, and to become the product of a distinct art. As we have seen, the earliest printers could visualize the mechanically made volume only as a counterfeit of its handwritten pattern. The type was based upon the hand-made letter, including all its variations and imperfections; the initial letters were left blank to be filled in by hand; and the margins were left ample to permit the illuminator to "light up" the page, just as he had been wont to do in the manuscript volume.

The early printed book contained no title page, no table of contents, no running head, no folios — simply because the handwritten pattern had established this style, and the more closely the printed book could be made to resemble the handwritten, the more credit the printer took to himself.

Early in the sixteenth century the skill of the printers in France began to threaten the supremacy of Italy in the art of printing. The first French printers approached the making of a book exactly as had the Italians, but in their attempts to copy the manuscript model they had been far less successful. By 1525 conditions in Italy operated against maintaining that high degree of excellence which had placed the Italian books in a class by themselves. The noble princes in the great centers of printing had either been overthrown by the new intelligence the people had gained from books, or were too occupied in protecting themselves to think of magnificently printed or decorated volumes. The masses, intoxicated by their new intellectual freedom, were demanding more and more printed books, and in their zeal for the power that came from added knowledge, they cared little for the physical appearance of the volumes that served as vehicles. The Book was to play a vital rôle, during this early part of the sixteenth century, in the history of the world.

This revolution took place in France after it had become history in Italy. François I failed to grasp the significance of what had happened to the Italian princes. He gathered about him, in his sumptuous Court, the greatest poets, the most famous authors, and the most celebrated artists of

the age, and the monarch gained keen delight in basking in the reflected glory of his environment. If Benvenuto Cellini the goldsmith proved so bright a jewel in his diadem, why should not a Royal printer, unhampered by financial limitations and inspired by the patronage of the Court, produce volumes so far superior to the work of the Italian master craftsman as to enable François to become the Father of Letters as well as the Maecenas of the Arts!

Granted that François felt himself competent to restrain the temper of his people, he was fully warranted in believing that there were printers among his subjects who were equipped to produce volumes which might compare favorably with the Italian masterpieces. Out of the indifferent examples of the early French press had come books made by Henri Étienne and later by Simon de Colines which promised a new era in the history of the Book, not only in the quality of workmanship, but also in the actual conception of what a printed book should be. The French master printers were sufficiently removed from the traditions of the earliest printed volumes to make it possible for them to consider dispassionately the subject of bookmaking as a whole. Disregarding what had gone before, they asked themselves what they could add to the practice of making books as

it then existed to make their product more appealing to the audience they sought to reach.

Arnold Ther Hoernen of Cologne in 1470 had (perhaps accidentally) introduced what constitutes the first title page in history; six years later, Erhardus Ratdolt in Venice elaborated the idea by adding decoration to what passed as a title. This was precedent enough for the French printers, particularly as this new page at the beginning of a volume offered an attractive location for the ever popular printer's mark, and, later on, as the page on which the censor's privilege was given great prominence. Aldus used his small capitals as running heads in a few of his volumes; the French printers found this practice helpful to the reader, and definitely adopted it. The Aldine books were either without folios, or had numbers only on the right-hand pages. This custom, the French contended, was confusing, so they placed the folios in proper sequence on each succeeding page. In some of the illuminated volumes there were "mirror" titles, which consisted of an illuminated page with the title of the book carefully lettered within a large circle in the center, smaller circles being arranged around the larger one, in each of which was recorded the title of a chapter. Now that the pages were properly numbered, a table of contents might easily occupy a page by itself with direct numerical

references; and this aid to the reader was quickly seized upon by the French. Sixtus Riessinger of Naples in 1485 had been the first to place leads between the lines of type; the French found this innovation exceedingly valuable in relieving the solid mass of the printed page and overcoming the difficulty of reading, of which booklovers complained.

Illustrations now came to be considered as part of the decorative scheme itself, and the clumsy woodcuts of the earlier period became, through the increased skill of the woodcutter, an expression of a real art. This union of the sister arts of engraving and printing was inevitable, and it is curious that its fulfilment was so long postponed. In printing from type, the impression is taken from a raised surface of metal; in printing the woodcut, from a raised surface of wood — and the similarity of method makes them natural kinsmen.

We have already seen that the decoration of books, an echo of the handwritten volume, was absolutely demanded by those who bought them. We have seen that the theory of the early printers that embellishment might be added to the printed page by hand was sound only in theory, as the cost proved too great for most of those who wished to secure the gem of thought in its new and less expensive form; while for those who could afford

the luxury of the handwritten and hand-illuminated volume the printed book was not considered worthy of the gem of thought it contained. It was natural, then, that during the first half of the sixteenth century makers of books should be influenced by the irresistible demand on the part of readers for greater decoration of the printed page. By 1530, this demand for decoration was exceeding all bounds. The reading public in France would not accept a volume unless it contained portraits, or initial letters, or borders, or illustrations. There was serious danger that the art of decoration was about to swamp the art of printing, and the fact that this tendency was kept under control is due to the influence of Robert Étienne, whose name stands first in the typographical annals of France.

This great revolution in the making of books did not affect the manner of execution, which changed very little from that of the fifteenth century, but applied itself primarily to the make-up of the volume. The type arrangement, the style and character of the letters and of the decoration, even the treatment of the cover, suddenly assumed distinct individuality. Instead of printing the notes as marginal references, they were placed at the foot of each page; the rubricated capital letters, which doubled the cost of the presswork, were now replaced by distinctive floriated letters in design

and line in complete harmony with the type, and printed in black. Just as the cumbersome parchment rolls had been superseded in the Middle Ages by manuscript volumes of such shape as was easily handled in reading, books were now bound in such a manner as to stand side by side upon a shelf, instead of to lie flat upon a table. The raised decorations and the inlaid precious stones or metal on the covers were abandoned because of possible damage such bindings might cause by rubbing against each other. Leather bindings came into general use, and for the first time the necessity of stamping the title upon the shelfback in gold letters became apparent. Jean Grolier is given credit for being the first to use a stamped title upon the shelfback of a book.

At this time the most impressive figure associated with books in France was a man named Geoffroi Tory, of whom far too little is known by the average student of the art of the Book. His influence upon everything which entered into the making of books not only affected the typography of his period, but was of supreme importance in determining the basic principles upon which the Book has rested ever since. He was a native of Bourges, born about 1480, of unknown, middle-class parents. There is scant record to show how this child developed into so accomplished a scholar,

a famous printer and engraver, the first Royal printer to François I, the author of the famous and revolutionizing *Champfleury*, the reformer of orthography and typography. Bourges, at the time of Geoffroi's childhood, was a city of some importance, with schools and a university, and it is fair to assume that he availed himself of some of these opportunities. His real education, however, began when he went to Rome, where the records show that he attended the famous college of La Sapienza, and later Tory himself records, in the *Champfleury*, the fact that he attended the lectures of the celebrated Filippo Beroaldo. He returned to France about 1504.

From this time on, Geoffroi Tory demonstrated considerable ability as a writer. His first literary work of which we have knowledge was an edition of Pomponius Mela, which he issued for Jean Petit, being printed by Giles Gourmont — the first printer to establish a Greek Press in Paris. Several of the articles which appear in this volume were written by Tory, signed *Civis*, this word being the signature he employed until he later adopted that of the Broken Jar. As a result of his erudition, Tory was appointed Regent, or Professor, in the College of Plessis in Paris. While here, he acted as editor for Henri Étienne, father of Robert, and in this way first came in touch with the Book in its

mechanical aspect, to which he was to devote his later years.

Tory did not find his labors as a professor sufficiently engrossing to satisfy his ambitious nature, so he took up the art of drawing, extending his experiment to the art of engraving, for which he quickly developed a peculiar aptitude. After applying himself in this way for three or four years, he determined upon a second visit to Italy, in order to study the classic forms and outlines in the original. He resigned his professorship, and began his eventful journey, to which constant reference is made in his *Champfleury*. It is fortunate that Tory had already become interested in typography and in the decorative side of the Book, as it encouraged him to study the beautiful inscriptions on the Italian monuments with the design of type letters in his mind.

Geoffroi returned to Paris about 1518, and immediately undertook to capitalize his study and experience. For a time he devoted himself to the illumination of manuscripts, but later gave his entire attention to engraving on wood, in which art he soon became famous. At this same time he became a member of the Fraternity of Booksellers (during the early history of printing in France, nearly all engravers were booksellers), and he immediately undertook the engraving of a series of

borders for a Book of Hours, which, upon its completion, he proposed to sell in his capacity as bookseller. From time to time Tory had engraved initial letters and decorations for Simon de Colines, Henri Étienne's successor, so it was natural that he should return to Colines to print his *Book of Hours*. This appeared in 1525, and stands as the first example of a printed book treated as the product of an art distinct in itself. The borders and the initial letters were drawn with the type face constantly in mind, keeping the line in complete harmony with it — instead of being simply beautiful, unrelated illumination, or a copy of embellished decoration. For the first time the Book was freed from its dependence upon the styles of decoration and the irregularity of type design previously copied from the handwritten volume.

The sensation created by the publication of this *Book of Hours* made it obvious to the French printers that it was a style to be immediately adopted. Colines secured Tory's coöperation in designing his office marks, floriated letters, and the borders which he used in the various volumes he issued, and in all probability Colines' Italic type, by many considered a finer letter than that cut by Aldus, was designed by Tory. But the artist was not content to stop here. Once having applied his skill to the Italic letters, he undertook

to standardize the Roman face as well, and to free all type characters from the defects of the hand letters upon which they had been based.

In his *Champfleury*, Tory works out the theory of deriving the shape and proportions of each letter from the symmetry of the human body. In a way, this idea was fantastic, but as a matter of fact his ideas completely revolutionized French type designing, gave a new distinction to the Roman characters, and abolished the use of Gothic.

Side by side with his designing and his wood engraving, Tory applied his scholarship to the encouragement of a more general use of the French language. He was thoroughly out of sympathy with those Frenchmen who chose to write in Greek and in Latin rather than in their native tongue, and he determined to establish the superiority of the French language in a single volume, to be illustrated by his own engravings, and to demonstrate through its text and execution the practicality of French as a medium of literary expression. This was the famous *Champfleury*, which appeared in 1529. Tory contended that the designer of letters and the printer must perforce be philologists. Finding that the lack of accents in the French language was a handicap, Tory was the first to introduce them; and he even took up the matter of punctuation. In this later innovation, it

may be said that his ideas of punctuating a sentence were quite at variance with modern usage!

Aside from his work, Geoffroi Tory's devotion was centered in his daughter Agnes, and when she died at the early age of ten the artist received a blow from which it took him long to recover. In the absorption of his grief, Tory wrote a short Latin poem commemorating the child, at the foot of which appeared for the first time his *Pot Cassé* mark — the Broken Jar, which came to be recognized as the symbol identifying Tory's work.

This mark is the most famous in the annals of the Book with the single exception, perhaps, of the Dolphin and Anchor of Aldus, and it is by all odds the most interesting. Tory explained its significance in his *Champfleury* — that the broken pitcher is symbolic of our body, which is only a vessel of clay; that the wimble represents Fate, which transfixes both the weak and the strong. The three chains stand for the Three Fates, sealing the Book of Life upon our death; and the Flowers in the pitcher are symbols of our virtues. It is quite as likely, however, that Tory had in mind a more intimate significance — that the broken pitcher stood for a life cut short; that the book recalled the literary studies of the lost Agnes, pursued under her father's direction; that the winged figure was intended to symbolize her soul; and the words

Non plus expressed a father's despair over the loss of a beloved daughter.

Much of Tory's work bears the so-called Lorraine cross, which has caused much discussion, as it appears on engravings which were certainly not made by Tory. The mark is really a double T, and is nothing more than the initial of Tory's last name; in fact, the wimble, in the more elaborate Tory device, is shaped like the letter T, and the French word for wimble, *toret*, is a play on the artist's name. Authorities now believe that the appearance of the Lorraine cross on the work of different artists is an evidence that Tory established a school, and that his pupils adopted his mark.

Tory's house in Paris was at the north of the Church of Saint Bénoit. Later he lived on the Rue Saint Jacques. Whether or not Tory actually printed any of the volumes attributed to him is an open question, yet there is no doubt that he was appointed Royal Printer by François I in 1530.

Geoffroi Tory died about 1533. Five years later François appointed two successors: Conrad Néobar, to produce the Greek publications, and Robert Étienne for the Latin and the Hebrew. When Néobar died, in 1540, Étienne added the Greek publications to his own responsibilities, and it was during his incumbency of the office that the famous

Royal Greek types were cut. The drawings were made by the celebrated calligrapher Angelos Vergetios, of Candia, whose Greek handwriting is considered the most beautiful ever seen. It was he who was employed by François to make transcriptions of Greek texts for the Royal Collection, and his manuscript volumes may still be admired in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. We have already seen that Aldus based his Greek types upon a direct imitation of the involved current handwriting of the day. The new letters, based upon the same principle, were even more elaborate, more involved, and more difficult for the compositors to handle — but they certainly were beautiful.

Robert Étienne came naturally by his interest in the art of printing. For more than a century and a half the Étienne family devoted itself to the making of books in Paris. Henri Étienne showed himself a conscientious and skilful craftsman; Robert, the second of his three sons, inherited all this, and added to it a degree of scholarship not possessed by another member of the family before or after, except, perhaps, his own son, Henri. The youthful Robert's precocity is a matter of record, but nothing is known of an exact nature concerning his education. The Étienne printing office, located on the Rue Saint-Jean de Beauvais, was a rendezvous for learned men, and

it is evident that Robert learned much more than the usual lessons of a printer's devil while assimilating the basic principles of good bookmaking under the tutelage of his father and later of his stepfather.

Henri died in 1520, when Robert was seventeen years old. Two years later the mother married Simon de Colines, who had been Henri's associate in the printing office, was more of a scholar, and was an equally good printer. The Étienne establishment continued for a year under the direction of Colines, by which time the youthful apprentice showed such a mastery of his art that Colines placed him in full charge. This was all very well for a time, but Robert had far different plans for himself than to remain as foreman for even so distinguished a printer as Simon de Colines, or eventually to become his successor. The boy had dreams, even as did the youthful Aldus, and in order to give them a chance to come true he broke away from the paternal office, and set up his own, nearby on the same street, when only twenty-two years of age.

Robert Étienne owed much to his stepfather beyond instruction as to how best to stick types on end. Simon de Colines was an enthusiast on the subject of Latin literature, his favorite author being Cicero. From association with Colines, the

quick intellect of the youthful Robert absorbed a new impetus in the direction of the classics which was to affect all his later work. Two years after starting his own Press, he married Perette Bade, an accomplished daughter of the scholarly printer Josse Bade. She ably supplemented his work and conscientiously assisted him in all his undertakings. While the busy Robert was engaged upon other duties, Perette met visitors to the Press, conducted the correspondence, and protected her husband from interruption. She spoke Latin as fluently as did Robert, and as their household, including editors and press correctors, embraced several nationalities, the conversation was carried on entirely in Latin — even as in the house of Aldus they spoke only Greek.

The publications issued by Robert Étienne so attracted the attention of the King that after Geoffroi Tory died, the appointment of Robert as Royal Printer was a natural sequence. The personal side of this new association proved delightful, for François possessed a genuine affection for the enthusiastic young scholar. It became a common sight for the King, accompanied by pages, equerries, and serious-faced professors astride their mules, to turn into the Rue Saint-Jean de Beauvais, on a visit to the Imprimerie Royale, over which Robert presided. On one such occasion the King came at a

moment when the printer was busily engaged in reading a proof for which the press waited. Such was their intimacy that when Robert asked Royal indulgence until the work was completed, François graciously assented.

At another time, the cavalcade halting before the Étienne establishment would include the beautiful and accomplished Queen of Navarre, Marguerite de Valois, sister to François, mounted upon her charger, and surrounded by a colorful company as escort. During these visits, Dame Perette was a charming hostess, joining with her husband in answering questions regarding the volumes then in process, and discussing with the Royal guests and the learned professors problems which were of general interest. The fact that all could converse in the common Latin tongue added to the brilliancy of these events.

There was another side to the post of Printer to the King which was not only trying, but eventually proved to be fraught with actual danger. The King might be indifferent to the awakening of the people as they became intellectually independent through the means of their new ally, the printed book, but Robert found himself constantly in difficulties with the Church authorities, who were acutely aware of what was happening, and who were naturally exercising every effort to hold

their power over a people threatening to break away from the old-time anchorage. When Martin Luther burned the papal bull of Leo x at Wittenberg in 1521 and started the Reformation, there naturally arose an overwhelming demand for information and instruction, and it was through books that the masses could best learn the arguments advanced on both sides of the questions then uppermost in everyone's mind. They bought books, therefore, not to be put on shelves, but to be read and studied. For the first time a full realization came to them of how powerful a weapon the printing press was as a defense against oppression by Church or State. The real demand for books on the part of the people dates from this time.

Here was a dilemma indeed for any printer. His function was to produce books; his livelihood required that he print books for which there was a definite demand; his reputation depended upon the accuracy of his texts. Robert, in spite of his Royal protection, found himself restricted by the censors, political as well as ecclesiastical, and seriously interfered with even in his daily life. Had he been less of a scholar he would have avoided certain difficulties. When a mere youth in his father's office, while seeing the *New Testament* through the press, Robert discovered certain

textual errors which were so obvious that he corrected them. Later, he undertook to make the reading of the New Testament easier by subdividing the chapters into verses, and adding marginal annotations, doing much of this labor, it is said, on horseback, while going back and forth between Paris and Lyons, where the Court was temporarily located, to report the progress of affairs in his office.

To take such liberties with the established text of the Bible stamped him, in the eyes of the censors, as a dangerous character, and he was kept under constant observation. His house was frequently searched for heretical works, and, on several occasions, the besieged printer had to take refuge at Court to avoid arrest. A King's officer could scarcely apprehend the person of a man while under the personal protection of the King, even though ordered to do so by the King's censors! "Every time I think of the battle I had with the Sorbonne during those twenty years," Robert exclaimed, "I marvel that anyone so small and worn out as I could have lived through the strain."

The position in which François found himself was none too agreeable for a seemingly all-powerful ruler. He was at heart a true friend of literature, and no other monarch of Europe had done so much for its advancement, yet the ecclesiastical and

political opponents to the general spread of learning were strong enough to prevent the full exercise of his personal desires. From time to time François gave definite evidence that in the struggle Robert was going through with the censors the printer held the King's hearty sympathy. When the doctors of the Sorbonne, for instance, banned the publication of Étienne's *New Testament* in 1541, François not only accepted a personal copy as a gift, but expressed his appreciation of Robert's accomplishment. This made it possible for the *Bible* to be sold to the general public, but the enraged ecclesiastics steadfastly prohibited its use within the precincts of the University.

François I was genuinely attached to Robert, and took real pleasure in associating with him and his books. "François I passionately loved literature and men-of-letters," — wrote Henri Étienne, Robert's son. "He had a particular affection for my father, and a few days before my father died, in the presence of all the Court, he made formal acknowledgment of this attachment. My father obtained from him whatever he asked for, and the extreme liberality of the King toward letters and learned men was to the advantage of great typographic enterprises. This even went so far that when he discovered what my father's desires really were, he exceeded them."

The cutting of the Royal Greek types is an interesting example of the King's interest. "François I provided large moneys for the making of extremely graceful letters both of Greek and Latin," Pierre Victoire records. "They were so nimbly and so delicately devised that it can scarce be conceived that human wit may compass anything more dainty and exquisite; so that books printed with these types do not merely invite the reader — they draw him by an irresistible attraction."

It was a bitter fight, and the censors won when François died in 1547. His son and successor, Henri II, was incapable of combatting the pressure brought to bear upon him. Heresy was declared treason, and punishable by death. Under this new law, Étienne saw the publisher Dolet executed and then burned, together with his heretical volumes, in the Place Maubert, in Paris. The printing of books in France had become too hazardous a risk, and Robert secretly made plans to transport himself and his printing office to Geneva. This was accomplished in 1552. Here he continued his work until his death, six years later.

At its height, the Étienne printing establishment in Paris carried five or six fonts of Roman and Italic type, several cases of rare ornaments and initials engraved on wood, and four hand presses. The personnel varied from fifteen to twenty edi-

tors, compositors, and pressmen, the workmen being Flemish or German. Robert spent thirty-four years of his life making books under his own imprint, averaging sixteen titles a year. When one considers the fact that he devoted much personal time and strength to the editorial preparation of his copy and in revising the proofs, when other printers left this responsibility largely to students, and that he had to defend himself and his publications against the never-ending attacks of the censors, he can appreciate Robert's statement, "Without divine assistance I should have succumbed under the burden."

Robert Étienne first made use of an individual printer's device in a volume issued in 1525. This consisted of a spreading olive tree, from which a branch was falling. Sauvel, writing as late as 1650, records the fact that the olive tree which suggested the device was still flourishing in the Rue Saint-Jean de Beauvais. A later writer says, "This olive tree now exists only upon Robert Étienne's books, but there it is imperishable." For motto, he selected the verse from *Romans* XI : 20, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Surely his life exemplified a very different sentiment!

Of the eight children that were born to Robert and Perette, Robert II worked with his father in the Paris printing office, while Henri II and Fran-

çois II assisted him with the volumes printed in Geneva. Simon died in his youth, and of Jean one only knows that he married and lived in Geneva. Of the three daughters history records no data. The names of the sons memorialize three of the personages most closely associated with the great printer's life.

The importance of the contribution made by Robert Étienne to the evolution of the Book cannot be overestimated. Aldus had demonstrated, that mechanical counterfeits of handwritten volumes could be produced of a quality which was befitting the contents and yet be sold at a price within the reach of the man in the street. He had prepared Greek grammars and lexicons, he had cut Roman and Italic types, his printed volumes were available for later printers to use as copy. Étienne made use of all the pioneer work that his predecessor had accomplished, maintained the high standard already established, and built upon the splendid basis thus supplied. He himself prepared a Latin dictionary, which remained a standard for two centuries. Stimulated by the influence of Geoffroi Tory, he had the Roman and Italic letters recut, freed from the inaccuracies of their handwritten models. He gave to lovers of the beautiful the most splendid Greek letters ever designed. The printed volumes which reached the people

through his courageous fight against the censors influenced the history of the world.

De Thou contends that Robert Étienne "left Aldus Manutius and Froben far behind him in judgment, technical skill, and elegance." This is an unjust comparison, for the half century which elapsed between the epochs of the two great scholar-printers produced conditions that cannot be compared. Each gave to the Book everything he had, and the sum total of that contribution so firmly established the art of printing upon basic truths that the work of their successors had to concern itself with problems of distribution and of factors later introduced by the broadening of the horizon of books, rather than with the vital principles of the art itself. But De Thou is well within the facts when he adds, "The labors of Robert Étienne did more for the honor and the immortal glory of France than all the great deeds of our wars, more than all accomplished by the arts of peace."

IV · CHRISTOPHE PLANTIN

The Beginnings of Publishing

IV · CHRISTOPHE PLANTIN

The Beginnings of Publishing

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By the middle of the sixteenth century all opposition to the printing press as a medium of duplicating volumes had disappeared, but new conditions arose which demanded from the master printers of this period attributes that had not been called upon during the epochs of Aldus or Étienne. The handwritten, illuminated manuscript volume remained just what it always had been — the exquisite expression of the form a limited number of wealthy booklovers believed the vehicle should assume in order to convey the thought of the author, clothed in worthy dress, to the soul of the reader. The printed book, carefully composed in type closely imitating the work of the scribes, with wide margins of beautiful hand-made paper, inviting elaborate hand illumination, had won its right to lie upon the table with its more glorified rival without disgrace. The dependence of the printed volume upon the traditions of the written book had been removed, and machine-made volumes had become the product of an art distinct

in itself. Printing machinery could now be bought instead of laboriously manufactured from original models. Ecclesiastical manuscripts, the classics, the works of the humanists, were now available to the man in the street at a cost within his means.

With the production of the volumes provided for, the problem now arose of how to place these books within the reach of all those who wished to buy them. By this time, the demand came not only from the communities in which the volumes were published, or from adjacent cities, but also from far distant points. Readers had become numerous the world over, and they expected books to be placed within their reach. No longer might printers satisfy this insistent demand by offering copies for sale at the various book fairs, as they had been wont to do. No longer might scholars ask great banking houses to act as intermediaries, as did the famous establishment of Függer of Augsburg in connection with the Aldine Press — such service would now have swamped the banks with detail. Depositories must be provided by the printers, agents must be appointed, branch offices must be established. In short, a new, coöperating business must be created. Out of these necessities was born the business of publishing, and at first no one thought of separating the two functions of producing and distributing.

The original manuscripts of practically all the great writers of the past had by this time been put in type, so that the master printer of the sixteenth century had an easier problem in the way of procuring copy. It was also a much simpler proposition to secure editors and proofreaders from neighboring educational institutions. On the other hand, the subject matter of books had become much more diversified. Most of the volumes issued by Aldus and Étienne had been printed in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew — a few in Italian and French. By the middle of the sixteenth century there were contemporary writers who produced manuscripts which had to be put into type in the vernacular tongues, and then distributed each in its natural field. This required a large staff of editors and proofreaders who were competent to prepare the copy and to read the proofs in the different languages.

This was the situation when Christophe Plantin entered the service of the Book, and became the leading figure associated with it during the last half of the sixteenth century. He was a Frenchman, born at Saint-Avertin, a small hamlet near Tours, in May, 1520. The boy's mother died of the plague while he was still a youth, and his father took him to Lyons to escape the contagion. Here the lad was left in the care of Claude Porret,

audiencier of the Church of Saint Just, with a small sum of money, while the father went on, ostensibly to Orléans and Paris. What really became of him is not known, as he never returned or communicated with his son or with Porret. Christophe was brought up with Porret's own son Peter, for whom he formed a deep attachment, until he grew old enough to strike out for himself. His earliest venture was an apprenticeship to Robert Macé, a printer in Caen, where he first became interested in the possibilities of the new art of typography. Here Christophe married and remained until 1546, when he decided to enlarge his horizon by going on to Paris to seek his fortune.

Plantin reached Paris at the very time when Robert Étienne was passing through his strenuous experiences with the censors. Christophe saw Henri II ascend the French throne, and he read one of the King's earliest proclamations — that heresy would be considered and treated as high treason. He was deeply impressed by the execution of Dolet, the Paris publisher, who was hanged and then burned at the stake for having in his possession heretical volumes. Plantin decided that Paris was no place for an ambitious printer, so, in 1549, he deserted the French metropolis and betook himself to Antwerp.

At this time Antwerp was the leading city in all

Europe. By the end of the fifteenth century it was already recognized as the most important town in the Low Countries, and as the glory of Bruges waned Antwerp developed. It was the natural center of trade, in the north, for Spain and Portugal; it attracted great financial princes, like the Függers, the Welsers, and the Hochstetters. English and French merchants, as well as the most enterprising traders in the Low Countries, selected Antwerp as the scene of their operations. By the middle of the sixteenth century, it outranked Paris or even London as the leading commercial city in the world.

The Netherlanders had shown consummate genius and skill in developing their commercial interests, with a result that during the sixteenth century the people turned with enthusiasm to the subjects of religion, politics, and literature. With the exception of Venice, Florence, and perhaps a few other Italian communities, where the old humanistic atmosphere still remained, there was no portion of the world where intelligence and culture were so generally diffused. Learning, which had previously been regarded as a luxury, had become a necessity. Antwerp was the center for art dealers, and the fine editions of the Aldine Press were in greater demand there than in any other city of Europe.

Christophe's selection of Antwerp was fully justified, but he was to experience disappointment on his arrival in that city when he discovered that a complete section of the town was already given over to the making of books, there being no less than fifty-six printers already established. Competition seemed hopeless to the newcomer, so he set up a shop, a little outside the city, where he soon became famous for his morocco-covered jewel boxes, his leather shrines, his bindings, and his mosaics.

Here, except for an accident, Christophe might easily have remained for the rest of his life, in which case the history of the Book would have been that much poorer. One of Plantin's customers in the little shop was no less a personage than Gabriel de Cayas, secretary to Philip II, King of Spain. The secretary wished to present to His Majesty a valuable gem, and he commissioned Plantin to make a beautiful case in which the gift might be enclosed. When the task was completed, Plantin undertook personally to deliver the casket. With this in mind, he set out one night, preceded by a servant carrying a torch. Suddenly, without warning, he was attacked by masked ruffians, who mistook him for a guitar player who had annoyed them, and whom they wished to punish. In the affray Christophe was seriously stabbed. He es-

caped with his life, but his right hand was forever useless.

Christophe Plantin could now no longer manufacture the beautiful but trivial souvenirs which had made his shop so popular, and again his mind turned toward the Book. "I can no longer earn my daily bread in binding books," he said, "so I shall write books with the press as pen." With new courage born from his experiences, he boldly established himself in the heart of Antwerp, and in 1555 issued his first volume. From that date down to 1867 the Plantin Press, presided over by Christophe Plantin and his descendants, carried on an unbroken business in the manufacture of books — a record not equaled by any other dynasty in typographical annals.

Christophe Plantin had what would pass as a good common-school education, but he was not a highly educated man when compared with Aldus or with Robert Étienne. The demands of the period called not so much for high scholarship as for business judgment and executive ability. He had some knowledge of English and Italian, and he read, wrote, and spoke Latin, German, Flemish, French, and Spanish. His tastes were scholarly, and he cleverly surrounded himself with students and scholars as associates in his undertakings. Plantin's greatest asset was the realization of his re-

sponsibilities: "I have always esteemed," he wrote, "that the teaching of the youth of a country, and all that depends thereon, as writing, printing, and books, is surely of as great importance for the King as money itself." It is a tribute to his character that in all the careful records of the Plantin Press kept during his lifetime there is no instance of any disagreement between the master printer and his authors, and but a few instances where the workmen failed to accept his authority without question. In these cases matters were quickly settled through the coöperation of a workingmen's committee, which Plantin had organized in his workshop. The Antwerp master printer was thus several hundred years in advance of the modern affiliation between capital and labor.

Plantin was a curious combination of dreamer and practical business man. A study of the Rubens portrait, of which a copy hangs in the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp, discloses seemingly conflicting characteristics. "I have had no other treasures than assiduous work, sobriety, and thrift," he wrote his married daughter, Madeleine, who applied to him for aid. Personal pleasures did not enter into his scheme of life. Montanus once said of him, "There is nothing material about Plantin. All is mind. He neither drinks nor sleeps."

In selecting Antwerp as his home, Christophe

could not have foreseen that he was thus placing himself in the very center of the life and death struggle which was taking place between the State, the Church, and the Press. In 1576, Antwerp was sacked by the Spanish soldiers, and so merciless was the attack that it was called the "Spanish Fury." For nine years all business within the city was interrupted, and Plantin's establishment dwindled from twenty-two presses and one hundred and fifty employees down to a single press. "Nine times," protested the harassed printer, "did I have to pay ransom to save my property from destruction. It would have been cheaper to abandon it."

In addition to the calamities of war came the oppressive censorship. At first the penalty for printing a book without official authorization was modestly fixed at five gold florins, but soon further and more severe penalties were added. An offending printer made himself liable to public exposure, of being branded with a hot iron, or losing an eye or a hand, as the judge might decide. Later still, the death penalty was added. At last the Inquisition took into its own hands the supervision and the censorship of the Press.

Grave doubts have been expressed as to Christophe's abiding religious principles. From the very beginning of his work in Antwerp he was harassed

by the ecclesiastical censors. At one time a tract issuing from Plantin's office was declared by the Margrave of Antwerp to be heretical, and Christophe and three of his workmen were actually condemned. His property was seized and everything he possessed was sold at auction. Plantin himself was in Paris at the time, and loyal friends bought in most of the property to save him from absolute ruin. Fortunately, Plantin was able to prove that the offending tract had been issued without his knowledge, but the three workmen were condemned to the Spanish galleys.

Then again, after forming one of the earliest printing and publishing associations in the history of the Book, Plantin found heresy charges brought against three of his partners. The Bomberghe brothers and De Schotti had to fly for their lives, but Christophe was not included in the accusation.

When, years later, he fled to Leyden, he was most friendly with the Protestants, who made that city their rallying point, yet no sustained charges were made against him that he had proved false to the religion of his family. Some historians give Plantin credit for unusual versatility in adapting his religious point of view to business conditions; but there is nothing to show conclusively that he was at any time other than a good Catholic.

Christophe Plantin was not a prophet without

honor in his own country. The contemporaneous Florentine nobleman, Guicciardini, who wrote so entertainingly of the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, included the Plantin Press with the spire of the Cathedral, the Town Hall, the Hansa House, and the Mint as "worthy to be viewed with delight and pleasure in Antwerp." He continues: "Up until now there has never been seen nor is seen in the whole of Europe so extensive and beautiful a printing establishment as that of Christophe Plantin, where there are so many presses, letters of all sorts, prints, and tools, proper and capable men earning higher wages with working, correcting, and revising in all languages, strange as well as familar ones, without any exception, so that all things combined, in this house, with its adherents and dependencies, more than 300 florins are spent on each work day; which establishment, surely a noble and Royal one, not only redounds to the credit and honor of its worthy founder and head, but also to that of the town itself; for its beautiful and valuable works are sent and spread in large numbers all over the world." Plantin himself, in a letter to the magistracy, declared that he possessed, "without boasting, so many stamps, matrices, presses, types, and figures, that all the printers in Europe assert never to have seen so many together as in this establishment."

HUNT LIBRARY
CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY

During the first half of Plantin's career, until the time of the Spanish Fury (1576), the Plantin printing office was the center of the spirit of the Renaissance. Christophe himself was the outstanding relic of the humanistic movement left in the sixteenth century, and, through his devotion to the advancement of the Book, he set an example to his fellow citizens that bore definite fruit. Antwerp, influenced by the teachings of Erasmus, manifested a strong tendency toward the higher intellectuality, but approached it with a daring born of the successful spirit of audacity which had previously won for the city such commercial supremacy. This attitude was fraught with danger, and Plantin's influence supplied the balance.

Just as the vision of Aldus Manutius had been to produce the Latin and Greek classics, so did the ambition of Christophe Plantin concentrate in a determination to produce the most perfect edition of the Bible that had yet been brought out. The preaching of Martin Luther had attracted the attention of the entire Christian world more particularly than ever to the Holy Scriptures. The people had been taught that this book was the single basis of their faith, and that their present and future welfare depended upon their familiarity with it. Plantin aspired to supply the world with the most accurate text, produced with

the greatest care exercised in every portion of the manufacture.

Aldus had started a polyglot Bible, but his death occurred before he could complete it. Plantin was the first to conceive and carry through the idea of having the Hebrew text on the left-hand page, with a parallel column in which the Vulgate was rendered; on the right-hand page he printed the Greek version, with a Latin translation in the parallel column. At the foot appeared a Chaldean paraphrase. New type had to be designed and cut, and Plantin commissioned Robert Grandjon, an engraver of Lyons, to design the Greek characters, based on the beautiful Royal Greeks of Robert Étienne, but made more practical for the compositors. Grandjon also drew the Roman letters and part of the Hebrew, in which Guillaume Le Bé collaborated.

By this time Plantin had assumed the position of the leading printer of his period, so with the announcement of his plan for this *Polyglot Bible* came flattering propositions from Frankfort, Heidelberg, and even Paris, seeking the honor of being associated with the important work. King Philip of Spain had been watching the development of Christophe Plantin's business with peculiar interest because of the highly favorable reports he had received from his secretary, Gabriel de Cayas. He

now had no notion of permitting any one to share in what he became convinced would be Plantin's greatest glory, so he undertook to subsidize the undertaking by promising to pay 21,200 florins for twelve copies on vellum.

In this way began the partnership between Christophe Plantin, master printer of the sixteenth century, and Philip II, King of Spain — an association which was directly responsible for Plantin's financial difficulties, yet indirectly the basis of all his subsequent material prosperity. One of the King's stipulations was that Plantin should receive as associate in the editorial end of the great work a famous Spanish scholar, Bénoît Arias Montanus. Christophe rather resented this apparent lack of confidence on the part of the King, but Montanus no sooner arrived in Antwerp than he charmed everyone by his personality, and won profound admiration for his learning. He immediately surrounded himself with collaborators from the neighboring University of Louvain, with a result that the *Polyglot Bible* became the most scholarly edition issued up to this time.

Not only did Montanus prove of the utmost service in the publication of the *Bible*, but he became Plantin's chief ambassador in securing privileges for its publication. Montanus actually devoted years to travelling from one Court to an-

other, and remained for months in Rome, finally persuading Pope Gregory XIII to reverse the attitude taken by Pius V that a general distribution of the Scriptures was dangerous, and to grant his approval to the work. He also secured privileges from Germany, France, Venice, and Naples. Vigorous opposition still remained, particularly on the part of Leon de Castro of Salamanca, and Noel Beda, dean of the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne, in Paris, the latter having been the chief thorn in the flesh of Robert Étienne.

The *Polyglot Bible* appeared in eight massive volumes during the years 1568 to 1573. A splendidly engraved title, representing the union of the people in the Christian faith and the four languages of the Old Testament, opens the first volume. The famous Plantin device appears in the lower, right-hand corner, and two other engraved plates follow, which are both decorative and illustrative. Full-page engravings also appear at the beginning of the fourth and fifth volumes. Twelve copies of the work were printed on vellum for King Philip. A thirteenth copy on vellum was begun but never finished. Ten copies were printed on large Italian imperial paper, about 300 copies on smaller imperial paper, and 960 on royal Troyes paper. King Philip presented one of his vellum copies to the Pope, another to the Duke of Alba,

and a third to the Duke of Savoy, depositing the remaining nine copies in the library of the Escurial.

The accuracy of the text, the cleverness of the typographical arrangement, the beauty of the frontispieces, the typography, and the presswork, together with the diplomacy of Montanus, all resulted in placing the *Polyglot Bible* upon so firm a basis that its opponents could not dislodge it from the triumphant place it won as the greatest typographical monument of its period.

While this was gratifying to Plantin, it did not relieve his financial embarrassment. The long delays occasioned by the uncertainty of securing privileges for publication made it necessary for the printer to incur all his expenses of manufacture before a single florin could come back to him by way of reimbursement. Each year cost him 25,000 florins for interest on his borrowed capital alone. Nothing but his high reputation as a business man of honor prevented the Plantin Press from coming to an abrupt termination at this point. Christophe sold his library, he cut the price on his precious Plantin Press volumes; but the debts kept mounting. "I am struggling with a many-headed monster," he writes to his old friend, Gabriel de Cayas. "The printing office is a regular whirlpool into the jaws of which one must always be throwing what is necessary, for otherwise it devours even

its master." King Philip, still oblivious to his financial obligations, expressed his approval of the *Polyglot Bible* by creating Plantin *prototypographe*, or ruler over all the printers in the city. This was an honor, but Plantin did not need the King's endorsement to a work which had already been accepted as a masterpiece. It did relieve him from the necessity of housing Spanish soldiers, and it also placed him in the strategic position of knowing exactly what competing printers were undertaking; but his creditors found nothing in the new title to satisfy their ever-present financial claims.

A more practical service that the King performed for Christophe Plantin was when he secured for him a license from the Holy See. The value of this monopoly was at that time underestimated both by the King and the printer, but during the two hundred years it existed the Plantin Press turned out millions of missals, breviaries, diurnals, psalters, antiphonaries, and offices of the Virgin, which brought a fortune to Plantin and his successors. By means of these and other equally unpretentious publications Christophe paid his creditors in full, placed the Plantin Press upon a sound business basis, and at his death left property valued at over $200,000.

The devices which the various printers adopted

were far more than trademarks. In them each master workman tried to express his own idealism and the objective he sought to attain. The famous Compasses held by a hand emerging from the clouds selected by Christophe Plantin as the center of his mark, together with his motto *Labore et constantia*, are peculiarly appropriate. The fixed point of the compasses perfectly symbolizes the tenacity and steadfastness with which Plantin met every difficulty and reverse; the moving point, describing a circle, expresses the never-ceasing activity and the ever-widening horizon of the great printer's mind. In the design of this device made by Rubens, Hercules stands on one side of the compasses, symbolizing Labor, while on the other side is the figure of a woman, personifying Constancy. The turning arm of the compasses also represents Labor, while the arm remaining at rest is Constant.

As the business of the Plantin Press grew, it had been necessary for Christophe to prepare himself to issue volumes in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Flemish, Dutch, and English. His business correspondence itself was conducted in four different tongues. His scheme of distribution was rapidly extending. The branch office planned for London had to be abandoned because of the "Spanish Fury," but in 1568 he

delivered to one correspondent there books valued at 4400 florins; during the single year 1570 the French branch of the Plantin Press, established in Paris in 1567, carried on a business of 19,000 florins; the branch house at Salamanca, managed by Perez, sold each year books to the value of from 5000 to 15,000 florins. In 1579 Plantin exhibited sixty-seven different titles at the book fair at Frankfort, " where assembled not only all the important publishers and editors, but also a great number of the learned men of the period," and of these he sold 5212 volumes. By this time Plantin shared with Henri Étienne, of Geneva, son of the famous Robert Étienne, the distinction of being the leading publisher of the world.

After nine years of continued war conditions, Plantin came to believe that Antwerp could never free herself from the Spanish yoke. Not only had the city itself been torn to pieces and business brought practically to a standstill, but many of the leading citizens had either lost their lives or had left Antwerp, seeking more advantageous surroundings for their work. Plantin was urged to follow their example. Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy, tried to persuade him to remove his establishment to Turin; he was even offered the post of Royal Printer by Henri III of France. Neither of these opportunites appealed to him.

Many of those upon whom the intellectual life and literary activity of Antwerp depended had found refuge in Leyden. Among these men was the great historian Lipsius, who had earlier been of such service to Plantin through his learning and by his skill as proof corrector. Lipsius had been made a professor in the new University of Leyden, which William of Orange had presented to this city in recognition of its courageous and successful resistance to the Spanish attacks. The University needed an official printer, and in 1583 Plantin accepted the invitation of his friend Lipsius to occupy this position, leaving the Antwerp establishment still running, but in the hands of his sons-in-law. The remuneration from this new post was two hundred florins a year.

Once in Leyden, Plantin established a well-organized printing office. Its foreman was Louis Elzevir, this being the first time a member of this famous family appears in typographical annals. Elzevir, however, was a bookseller rather than a printer, with no practical knowledge of making books. So long as Plantin directed the enterprise all went well; but Elzevir was the gainer in the association, learning from the great master printer much that was to prove useful to him and to his family in later years. When Christophe returned to Antwerp, in 1585, he left the Leyden office

in charge not of Louis Elzevir but of Francis Raphelengius, his own son-in-law.

This return to Antwerp brought back the joy in Plantin's heart. The battle-scarred veteran could never have been happy in Leyden. The result of the war, so long drawn out, had been to separate the Netherlands into the Dutch Republic at the north, leaving the southern portion, the present Belgium, still in the hands of Spain. This was perhaps fortunate for Plantin, for King Philip was friendly, and possibly felt himself under further obligations because of his defaulted payments. The great printer, undaunted by the destruction of Antwerp's prosperity and commercial supremacy, began business over again with the single press which remained active in his establishment, and within two years made of the "Golden Compasses" a going and successful concern. *Labore et constantia!*

Christophe Plantin died in 1589, and was worthily succeeded by his son-in-law, Jean Moretus. In his will the old man made the wise stipulation that the management of the business should always be in the hands of that particular descendant who, in the opinion of the family, was best qualified to handle it. Moretus was an accomplished scholar, possessed a broad knowledge of languages, and inherited Plantin's humanistic tendencies.

Jean had served the Plantin Press since his fourteenth year, and had so fully assimilated the basic principles of its founder that during his administration the Press closely followed the old traditions. Beyond this, Jean manifested a particular interest in the scientific quality of his publications, guarding the mechanical perfection and the artistic appearance of the volumes, but adding titles of an advanced scientific nature.

Jean Moretus, at his death in 1610, was succeeded by his son Balthazar, who ranks as the greatest printer of the Plantin family after Christophe himself. Even as a lad, Balthazar displayed great cleverness in writing Latin, much to the delight of his grandfather, and his appreciation of the artistic side of printing developed in his home environment. When he assumed his position as the head of the Plantin Press he surrounded himself not only with scholars, but with some of the greatest artists of his period, Peter Paul Rubens being among his most intimate friends. Lipsius, the old associate of his grandfather, was devoted to the younger man, and, under the guidance of this great scholar, Balthazar became one of the great neo-Latinists of his period. Through his friendship for Rubens, Balthazar carried the art of copper engraving, as applied to books, to the highest point it had ever reached.

Plantin had previously introduced copper plates in some of his earlier volumes, which was in itself a tremendous innovation in bookbuilding. Under the encouragement of Balthazar, Rubens and his contemporaries contributed the best of their art to the Book. Frontispieces, title pages, decorations, and ornaments of all kinds were now etched on copper for missals, breviaries, and scientific books. These still embodied the same principles of decoration combined with illustration which appeared in the woodcuts that preceded them. Their beauty is undeniable, yet copper-plate engravings were never intended to be combined directly with the printed page. These superb inserts so overwhelmed the type that their use contributed to the decline of printing as an art.

Carefully observing Christophe's dying injunction, the Press passed through successive generations presided over always by that descendant best qualified to serve as its head. Unfortunately, the skill and accomplishments of these descendants declined as time went on, so that the work of the Plantin Press in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries differed little from that of any other commercial printing office. Finally, in 1867, competition became so severe that the Plantin Press passed out of existence, after a record-breaking dynasty of over three centuries of continuous

bookmaking. Nine years later, the State Government combined with the city of Antwerp to purchase the property from Edouard Moretus for 1,200,000 francs, and by this far-sighted act was established the famous Plantin-Moretus Museum. Here the types, ornaments, engravings, even the presses, going back to the time of old Christophe Plantin, are now preserved for posterity.

Not the least valuable among the relics are the old account books which, without a break, show what printing establishments of each period paid for materials, as well as the *honoraria* given to authors and the prices charged for the finished volumes. As the purchase power of money in the sixteenth century is estimated at ten times what it is today, these disbursements may be compared with modern costs.

Many of the authors were content to accept in full payment for their copyrights a certain number of printed copies of their work. Jean Isaac, in 1554, received 100 copies of his *Hebrew Grammar*; Dodonaeus, in 1565, accepted 50 copies of his *Frumentorum Historia*; Hunnaeus, in 1556, received 200 copies of his *Dialectica*. Sometimes the *honorarium* included a small payment of cash as well. Guicciardini, for instance, received for his volume on the Low Countries, already quoted, 50 copies and 82 florins: Stadius, in 1567, accepted 20 florins

outright for the manuscript of his *Commentaries on Florus.*

As for the editors and correctors, Raphelengius, Plantin's son-in-law, formerly a professor in the University of Cambridge, in England, and the most accomplished editor of his period, received $640 a year; Killanus, who possessed sufficient ability to write prefaces and Latin poems, to translate manuscripts and to compile a Flemish dictionary, was paid $6.40 a week after fifty years of service.

Plantin's younger daughters so assimilated the scholarly atmosphere in which they lived that they held copy, even in foreign languages, before they were twelve years old.

The work day in the Plantin Press began at five o'clock in the morning with no hour for closing. The compositors averaged about $200 a year; the binders were paid " by the piece " — 8 cents a copy for the labor on an octavo sheepskin volume, 12 cents for a folio, and from 56 to 88 cents for a folio in full calf. The large vellum skins which were used in the *Polyglot Bible* cost $3.60 a dozen.

Plantin's classics varied in price in proportion to the number of pages. The pocket classics were figured at a rate of 8 cents for each six sheets, and the octavo classics 8 cents for each four sheets, a sheet being eight pages. The octavo *Virgil*, con-

taining 38 leaves, brought 40 cents, and the folio edition, 165 leaves, was priced at $1.60. The great *Polyglot Bible*, eight huge volumes, sold at $28.00 with fifteen per cent. discount to the trade.

Plantin never published less than 1250 copies in an edition unless the book was privately subsidized, and the largest single edition of any Plantin book was the *Pentateuch* in Hebrew, of which he ran 3900 copies. Even after Christophe had developed an elaborate system of branches and agencies, he still continued the retail bookshop at the Plantin Press. At first Jean Moretus presided over this, but when Jean became the head of the establishment, the books were sold to professors and students from the universities and to other customers by the Plantin daughters, clad in quaint, goffered collars and linen head-dresses.

It is important to distinguish between Christophe Plantin, the great printer of the second half of the sixteenth century, and his predecessors, Robert Étienne and Aldus. The Plantin volumes by no means compare favorably with those issued by the two other great artist-printers; but they were the best of their period, and showed a quality of technical excellence combined with a recognition of the new conditions surrounding the making of books during the Plantin epoch. Printing by this time had ceased to be a fine art — Plantin

practised it as a liberal art. He enlarged the horizon of the Book. He laid the foundations for the great business of publishing; he demonstrated the fact that volumes could be well made in the face of world-wide competition and be held true to the basic principles of good bookmaking; he coördinated scholarship and technical skill; and, although belonging perhaps to the second group of the great printers in the history of printing, he must always be permanently included among those who, through the Book, have benefited mankind.

V · THE HOUSE OF ELZEVIR

The Art of Printing Yields to the Necessities of Publishing

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For nearly a half century after Christophe Plantin's death in 1589, the Plantin Press, under the guidance of Jean Moretus and his son Balthazar Moretus I, held the proud distinction of being the most celebrated imprint in the world. Gradually, however, the name of another family forced itself upon the attention of booklovers, and by 1635 the House of Elzevir had gained a clear ascendancy over the House of Plantin-Moretus.

The Elzevirs approached the Book as publishers and distributors rather than as printers, and to them the quality of workmanship was of secondary importance. Books were to be printed for the masses rather than for the cultured class — for an audience more concerned to secure the subject matter at a small price than with the dignity or appropriateness of the vehicle that conveyed it. The glory that had come to Aldus, to Étienne, and, in a lesser degree, to Plantin for the beauty of their

volumes meant little to the Elzevirs: they saw in the world-wide demand for books, stimulated by the embryonic efforts of the Plantin Press to establish branches and agencies, a promising opportunity for commercial success, provided they could extend and standardize the new business of publishing, and supply their product at attractive prices.

The House of Elzevir includes a larger number of names than any other dynasty associated with the Book. Starting with Louis Elzevir, whom we first met as foreman in Plantin's office in Leyden in 1583, down through Daniel Elzevir, with whose death in 1680 the business of the Elzevirs came to an end, there are no less than fourteen individual members of the family in direct line who contributed their part toward the output and the distribution of the Elzevir volumes. Yet, in spite of this large number, only a few of the names deserve permanent record.

Louis Elzevir 1, the founder of the House, had served his apprenticeship as a binder in Louvain. In 1580 it became difficult for Protestants to conduct their affairs in the Catholic provinces of Flanders, so Louis, together with many others of his religious faith, crossed over into Holland with his family, and settled in Leyden, joining there the refugees from other cities. The University

which William the Silent had founded in Leyden to commemorate the successful resistance made by its citizens against the Spanish siege, had attracted so many of the learned scholars of Europe that Leyden, at this moment, was the literary center of the world.

Here Louis Elzevir established a bookshop and accepted orders for bookbinding from the students and the professors of the University. Little success came to this new adventure. The class to which books most naturally appealed was not that most favored in worldly possessions, and the war conditions that had existed so long had still further depleted the slender purses. At the University of Leyden, as at other universities during this period, it was a common practice for students and even for professors to rent their textbooks or to loan them, exchanging one with another.

This was the situation in which Louis Elzevir found himself when Christophe Plantin arrived in Leyden, a refugee from the "Spanish Fury" in Antwerp. Elzevir was only too glad to accept the great printer's proposition that he abandon his own unprofitable business and become foreman of the new Plantin printing office. Plantin was well aware that Louis had no knowledge whatever of typography or presswork, but this deficiency he could himself supply. He counted upon him to be of

service particularly in marketing the books after they were produced. Elzevir also, from his experience as University Bookseller, possessed a knowledge of what titles were most likely to prove successful; and this was of distinct value to the older man.

When peace was restored in Antwerp in 1585, two years after the association between Louis Elzevir and Christophe Plantin began, Christophe decided to return to his former home. The Leyden office had developed to a point where it was profitable, so, instead of closing it, Plantin continued it as a branch of the Plantin Press at Antwerp. With his own departure, however, it became necessary for him to place in charge some one with greater knowledge of typography and presswork than Louis Elzevir possessed, so Christophe appointed as his successor his own son-in-law, Francis Raphelengius. Under these circumstances, Louis Elzevir had to make new plans for his future.

During these two years spent with the great master printer Elzevir had added much to his own personal asset. He could never hope to become a practical printer, but he had assimilated through his association a sufficient knowledge of printing to make himself a thoroughly practical publisher. His vision was to establish bookselling branches all over the world, and eventually to have each

branch in the hands, not of a representative, but of an actual member of his family. This seemed an ambitious program, but as Louis Elzevir was blessed with six sons, he started with an unusual advantage in having a substantial basis for establishing his publishing dynasty. During the years in which he had acted as University Bookseller, and even during the two years of association with Plantin, Louis had carried on an extensive correspondence with scholars in France, Germany, and Italy, with the result that at the time of his death, in 1617, the name of Elzevir was already well known throughout the intellectual world as being closely associated with the Book. During the fifteen years following his death Louis Elzevir's dream was realized. The House of Elzevir came to be directly represented in practically every bookselling center of Europe, in almost every instance by some actual member of the Elzevir family.

The scheme adopted by the founder, and scrupulously followed by his successors, was to have each of the younger Elzevirs, as he became old enough to take on business responsibilities, serve a certain number of months in each of the branch offices, this being a definite part of his training for the business. Louis Elzevir himself established the precedent by passing several months in each year in the book centers of Germany and France. His

son Bonaventura, before attaining the age of twenty-three had already spent considerable time in the branches established in the most important cities of Italy. As time went on, the grandchildren and the nephews were allocated to the different agencies as far south as Naples and as far north as Copenhagen.

The responsibilities of these representatives of the House of Elzevir went considerably beyond watching the routine of the bookselling business or in disposing of the product of the Elzevir Press. New manuscripts were to be secured from the leading writers of the time upon pertinent subjects, and no rival publishing house could compete with the Elzevirs in their contact with scholars and writers. A surprisingly large number of English authors turned to them for the publication of their works, and so highly was the imprint of the Elzevirs regarded that the House was able to pirate almost any foreign author not only with impunity but with his appreciative approval. A curious letter written by Balzac in 1648, after the Elzevirs had issued an unauthorized edition of his *Lettres Choisies*, reads:

" I am under larger obligations to you than you may yourselves fully realize. I consider the right of Roman citizenship to be a small privilege compared with that which you have conferred upon me

in including my name in the list of your authors. This is to give me rank with the consuls and senators of Rome; I am made an associate of the Ciceros and the Sallusts. What glory comes to me when I can say, 'I am a citizen of the Republic of Immortals; I have been received into the circle of the demigods.'"

At the time of Louis Elzevir's death, in 1617, two of his sons were conducting bookshops, one at Utrecht and the other at The Hague — both affiliated with the Leyden bookshop. As a result of a family council, the oldest son, Matthew, and the youngest son, Bonaventura, formed a partnership to carry on their father's bookselling and publishing business, and Isaac, Matthew's son, established at Leyden the first Elzevir printing office. There are perhaps a hundred books dated earlier than 1617 which bear the imprint of Louis Elzevir, but these were printed for and not by him. With this new association of the younger men the Elzevir imprint really begins. This second period in the Elzevir history lasted from 1617 to 1625, and while the two printers issued over one hundred separate titles, their work was of significance in the history of publishing rather than of printing.

By this time the independence of the Dutch Republic had become assured, but the Thirty Years' War was just beginning in Germany. Thus, while

the new Elzevir firm was secure from interruption at home, much initiative, diplomacy, and ability were required to establish and maintain business connections in such book-trade centers as Frankfort, Leipzig, or Cologne. The business sagacity of these publishers, which so steadily developed their system of distributing books in spite of the surrounding obstacles, entitles them to enduring fame far more than does the typographical quality of their volumes. They were keen enough to foresee that a natural development of the new Dutch nation would result in an unprecedented demand for books, and that, so far as foreign countries were concerned, the supremacy of the Dutch fleet must drive trade away from Venice and Genoa directly to Haarlem and Amsterdam.

It was a period of controversies, and controversy always stimulates the demand for books. The doctrines of Arminius interested a class of readers which previously had been little attracted to literature of any kind. Such subjects as predestination, redemption, depravity, and conversion, discussed by the Remonstrants and the contra-Remonstrants, produced arguments the man in the street had to read in order to know on which side he stood. No wonder that Isaac Elzevir recognized that the moment had arrived to start his printing office in Leyden, to supplement the bookstore and the publish-

ing business his grandfather had established, now being run by his father and his uncle.

Isaac Elzevir became University Printer in 1620. It is sometimes difficult to understand the exact relations and responsibilities of a University Printer to his University, so such details as the records contain of the basis of Isaac's appointment are of more than passing interest. Whereas his predecessors had received as much as two hundred florins for their annual compensation, Isaac received but fifty florins, yet the material advantage of the title was such that the value of the position, even at the smaller stipend, became greater than it had ever been. In the agreement between the University and Isaac it was stipulated that the printer must at all times hold one of his presses at the disposal of members of the University faculty, and, during certain periods, two presses. Presumably these presses were expected to turn out the necessary instruction papers required in the various classes.

Isaac agreed to place at the service of the University correctors who were competent to supervise the text in any language; one copy of each book printed had to be deposited in the University library, and the general supervision of the subject matter in the volumes was regulated by the States-General. In exchange for these services, the printer

received his modest financial *honorarium*, was permitted to place his title of Printer to the University upon his volumes, and a portion of the University quadrangle was set apart for his printing office, free of rent.

When Matthew Elzevir retired, Bonaventura took his nephew Abraham into partnership with him. Isaac still continued to print the volumes published by his uncle and his brother, in addition to exercising his prerogative as University Printer. When Isaac retired in 1625 Bonaventura and Abraham took over his printing establishment, and again united the business of typography with that of publishing. This period, from 1625 to 1652, marks the high-water point of typographical excellence in the Elzevir volumes.

The importance of the Elzevir printing office was largely enhanced by the purchase of the materials in the private printing office of Theodorus Erpenius, who at that time was one of the few printers in Europe who possessed fonts of Oriental type. This Erpenius was a prominent scholar in the faculty of the University of Leyden. He found himself handicapped in instructing his students in the Oriental languages by the lack of proper textbooks, and, to overcome this, he established in his own house a printing office in which he undertook to produce at his own expense the manuscripts

of Eastern authors. Unfortunately, he died when only forty years of age, before he was able to accomplish his ambitious undertaking, leaving his widow in possession of the type designs and molds, into which he had put the entire family fortune. When she endeavored to realize upon this property, the University advanced definite objections, being unwilling to permit so valuable a collection to pass out of the country, yet having no funds of their own available for purchase. In this emergency Isaac Elzevir came to the rescue, and supplied the capital to take over the property. As a result of this, Isaac's *honorarium* as University Printer was raised to one hundred florins, but with the distinct understanding that the cherished Oriental types should never be removed from Leyden.

In 1629 Bonaventura and Abraham Elzevir began the publication of a series of Latin classics, starting with *Horace* and *Ovid*, in a reduced size which copied very closely the proportions of the famous Aldine classics. Isaac had introduced this innovation, but his successors developed the idea, which reached its highest point in the charming *Caesar* and *Terence* of 1635. For this series they had Christophe van Dyke cut an entirely new series of type of smaller size, based upon the Roman designs, recut under the influence of Geoffroi Tory, but still further refined and standardized.

This new *format* did not at first meet with universal approval. "The Elzevirs are certainly great typographers," the learned scholar De Put wrote to Heinsius. "I can but think, however, that their reputation will suffer in connection with these trifling little volumes with such slender type. An author like *Horace* deserves to be produced in a dignified form with a certain majesty of appearance, and not to have his thoughts buried in shabby little type like this."

But the Elzevirs were building their books on plans which contemplated the largest possible sale. They knew that these "trifling" editions of the classics could be produced more cheaply than the folios and quartos and octavos, and they also knew that their greatest market was to be found among those scholars who though impecunious, yet coveted and required possession of accurate texts. These purchasers were quite ready to sacrifice the luxury that attends ample margins and large types for the less readable pages and scanter margins which the House of Elzevir now placed before them at such attractive prices. The text was found to be well edited, and the cheaper editions fulfilled every utilitarian requirement of a book-reading rather than a book-loving public.

Then, curiously enough, this diminutive *format*, which had been adopted solely for commercial

reasons, was accepted by booklovers as quite superior to the larger sizes which had previously met with such approval! The delicacy of the type designed by Christophe van Dyke, the proportions of the page, and the compactness of the volumes all came in for such praise that the Elzevir volumes were proclaimed as surpassing anything that had previously been produced in Europe. Looking backward, it seems incredible that any such verdict could have been passed. As far as the type is concerned, Van Dyke did his work well, and the press-work, while varying greatly in different editions, was sometimes good; but by this time the splendid hand-made paper was being cheapened. Swiss paper makers were producing at lower cost a sheet made of inferior rags and with a substituted fiber; and ink makers had learned the unhappy secret of economizing by using cheaper ingredients. Compared with the Aldine, the Étienne, or the Plantin volumes, those produced by the House of Elzevir were far inferior; but they were so much superior to anything else that was produced anywhere in the world during their period that such merits as they possessed stood out in bold relief. The *Caesar*, *Terence*, and *Pliny* of 1634–1636 are the finest examples of the Elzevir volumes. The engraved title pages — a feature revived from that introduced by the Plantin Press — added beauty to the

editions even though seldom in keeping with the typography of the volumes themselves.

The craze for Elzevir volumes is one of the curious phases in the history of the Book. A volume called *Entretiens sur les Contes de Fées*, which was published as long ago as 1699, contains the following comment: "I am acquainted with a man who denies himself necessities for the sake of collecting into a library as many little Elzevirs as he can lay his hands upon. He is dying of hunger, and his consolation is to be able to say, 'I have all the poets whom the Elzevirs printed. I have ten examples of each of them, and all with red letters, and all of the right date.'"

This halo has hung around these little Elzevirs even down to the present time, particularly among those who do not fully understand the comparative merits of the best-printed books of each period. Unscrupulous rare-book dealers have made many an extra penny by capitalizing this lack of actual knowledge. "Priceless little Elzevirs" is a common expression, yet, to those who know, an Elzevir which is two millimeters too short in height, or which bears any date other than certain "right" dates, is hardly worth the value of the paper upon which it is printed.

Nothing prior to 1626 is highly considered. The best dates are those books which were issued from

1634 to 1636, and the average height should be from 125 to 128 millimeters. Anything under 125 millimeters may be a curiosity, but it has little value. One of the finest Elzevir books, Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* possesses no date, but may be recognized by the fact that the folio which should appear on page 238 is erroneously printed 248. The rarest and most expensive Elzevir volume is *Le Pastissier François*, an ancient cook-book, issued by Louis III and Daniel Elzevir in Amsterdam in 1655. It is poorly printed, and has absolutely no intrinsic value, but as most of the copies originally fell into the hands of cooks (a class not celebrated as preservative bibliophiles), only ten copies are known to exist.

Bonaventura and Abraham Elzevir both died in 1652, and the conduct of the business fell upon Daniel, son of Bonaventura, and John, son of Abraham. Their best known work was the *Imitation of Christ* already mentioned. Three years later Daniel decided to go to Amsterdam, so the partnership was dissolved, leaving John the sole representative of the Elzevir traditions in Leyden. The reputation of the House of Elzevir was on the wane. John died soon after Daniel left, and his widow, Eva van Alphen, did her best to carry on the business. She even secured her appointment as University Printer; but the burden was too

heavy. When her son Abraham was old enough, he was expected to revive the lost prestige, but he proved unworthy and incapable. The quality of the workmanship sank lower and lower, and when Eva died in 1681 the House of Elzevir ceased to exist in Leyden.

The migration of Daniel Elzevir to Amsterdam was due to the influence of his cousin, Louis III, who had established himself there in 1638 as a bookseller and publisher. Two years later he added a modest equipment for producing some of the volumes he issued. Upon Daniel's arrival in 1655, the two cousins established an Elzevir printing office that completely eclipsed the one at Leyden, and gave to it a stability which carried it until nearly the end of the seventeenth century. This was really a tribute to the publishing abilities of the new firm, for, even with the deterioration in the quality of the Leyden volumes during this period, they are better made books than those bearing the Amsterdam imprint. Louis retired from the business in 1665, and Daniel then carried it on alone until his death in 1680. Daniel had the unhappy responsibility of guiding his affairs through the stormy period of the war between Holland and England, during 1665–1667, which resulted in transferring the colony of New Amsterdam, now New York, to the English crown. Five years later,

the disastrous six-years' war with France hastened the downfall of the Elzevir dynasty.

By this time the direct succession in the Elzevir family could no longer be maintained. There were no sons or even nephews to succeed Daniel. His widow, Anna, made a feeble effort to continue the line of publications, but the momentum given by the first Louis, and maintained by his descendants, could carry the business no farther. The actual work of the Elzevirs came to an end in Leyden in 1681 and in Amsterdam in 1680.

Aside from the work of the House of Elzevir in Leyden and Amsterdam, with which the name is most commonly associated, the branch establishments give impressive evidence of the successful efforts made by these progressive publishers to place books within the reach of all the world. The Elzevir shop in The Hague, presided over by Louis II and later by Bonaventura, was opened in 1590, and was continued until 1661. In Venice, the Elzevir office, opened in 1622, was located near the original site of the Aldine Press, and a flourishing agency was conducted in Florence. In England, the Elzevir volumes were as well known as the Tauchnitz editions of later date. There was an Elzevir representative at every Frankfort Fair during the troublous period of the Thirty Years' War in Germany, and for a long time the Elzevirs

held almost a monopoly in supplying Germany with Dutch, English, and French publications. The first Louis successfully overcame the attempts of the French booksellers to prevent foreign competition, and established a large and prosperous business in Paris, which Bonaventura continued and increased. In Copenhagen the Elzevir branch, established by Louis II in 1632, controlled the book trade in Denmark, and by 1650 Daniel had secured an equal grasp on volumes sold in Sweden. Queen Christina even tried to persuade Daniel Elzevir to add a printing establishment to his publishing business in Stockholm.

The fact that the Dutch Republic removed the ban of censorship from the press more fully than any state in Europe made the success of the Elzevirs easier to accomplish. The States-General simply forbade the publication of libelous volumes, or of any literature directed against the Republic or its Allies. If the Elzevirs were in doubt regarding any of their publications, they adopted the expedient of omitting the usual name of printer and place of issue. Sometimes *Lugduni* (Lyons) was substituted for *Lugduni Batavorum* (Leyden). Such mythical imprints as *Jean Sambix* and *Nic Schouten* have been identified as Elzevir volumes. This freedom from governmental or ecclesiastical conflict enabled them to devote their time and ef-

forts steadfastly to their single purpose of publishing, and while the House of Elzevir has no great typographical masterpiece to its credit, it has no such financial calamity as Plantin's *Polyglot Bible*.

The Elzevirs were not scholars, Daniel being the only member of the dynasty who made any pretense to cultivated attainments; but, beginning with the first Louis, each possessed such appreciation of scholarship that he surrounded himself and his work with those who could supply that which he himself lacked. Chief among the literary advisers of the House was Daniel Heinsius, the learned secretary of the Synod of Dort, and other less famous but equally valuable collaborators kept watch over the editorial end of the publications, while the generations of Elzevirs covered the earth in establishing their branches and agencies.

During the century from 1583 to 1681 the House of Elzevir published 1608 separate works or editions, of which about 90 per cent. were in Latin, the other texts being in French, Dutch, Greek, Italian, and Arabic. These included the classics in Greek and Latin, theology, metaphysics, medicine, political science, natural science, history, and biography.

The dramatic publications included Molière and Corneille. Curiously enough, in view of the period, the Elzevirs issued but two editions of the Bible —

one in Dutch and one in French, and editions of the New Testament in Greek, for use in the University. The almost total absence of any work by the old standard authorities of the Church, so conspicuous in the publication of their predecessors, is ample evidence that the demand for this class of ecclesiastical literature had waned.

Had the Elzevirs been better printers they might have repeated the long continuation of the Plantin-Moretus dynasty. As it was, they developed the business of publishing to a point never before attained, and established a basis upon which our present system of publishing squarely rests. While their contribution to the history of the Book was less artistic and more commercial, it was no less vital. No other publishing house ever produced so extensive or so comprehensive a list of important volumes. No matter how well printed a book may be, the full accomplishment of its message cannot be secured unless it is placed within the reach of those who wish to absorb it. By reducing the cost and by developing the methods of distribution, the Elzevirs made it easy for the masses to secure books. In accomplishing their commercial success, who shall say that they did not serve the advancement of higher education in boldly departing from the previously conceived idea that books were intended primarily for the wealthy class?

VI · JOHN BASKERVILLE

Bright Lights in the Dark Age of Printing

VI · JOHN BASKERVILLE

Bright Lights in the Dark Age of Printing

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Booklovers from the middle of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth found their only consolation in turning to the work of the great master printers of the past. After the issue of the Elzevir classics in the 1630's the decline in materials and workmanship in printed volumes all over the world was steady and rapid. So complete was the degradation of the once noble art that it would have required a prophet of uncanny foresight to predict a possibility of a return to anything even approaching its former glory. That the revival should have been accomplished by an amateur, with no previous experience in the making of books, and of a personality that invited criticism and opposition, makes the fact that much the more surprising.

John Baskerville is the most curious character included among those who contributed vitally to the history of the Book. He was born in 1706, in the small parish of Wolverley, in Worcestershire,

England. Beyond this, little is known of him until his seventeenth year, when he entered the service of a clergyman at King's Norton, as a footman. Fortunately for the young man, his master's obsession was to assist his congregation in securing an education. When he discovered that his footman was no ordinary servant, and that he was particularly skilled in penmanship, the clergyman released him from his more menial duties to make him instructor in the art of writing to the young people of the parish.

By this accident Baskerville first became interested in letters and lettering, and although it was many years before he applied the skill and experience thus developed to the account of the Book, the formation of that little parish writing class contributed its part to the reclaiming of printing as an art.

Baskerville's reputation as a writing master grew, and it was not long before he was offered a position in King Edward's School in Birmingham. This was the period in England when the middle classes were coming into power. The battle of Culloden, in 1745, had destroyed for all times the theory of the divine right of kings. The preaching of Whitefield and John Wesley was making the people think, and giving them a realization of their own resources. It was the period when Eng-

land began its rule of the East, and, by gaining possession of Montreal in 1760, extended its power in the New World. The British Empire was in process of being created by the commercial achievements of its middle class.

Birmingham at that time was one of the great middle-class towns in England. It was the freest town in all England. There were no trade guilds, no unions, no religious restrictions. Young Baskerville was a "free thinker," and all that he heard about Birmingham made him eager to cast his fortunes with those who, in other localities, would have been known as heretics. Thus Birmingham in 1733 received a citizen who, with Watt and his steam engine, and Wyatt with his spinning machines, was to give additional glory to its name by making it the center of the eighteenth century revival of the art of printing.

Soon after settling himself in Birmingham, and to give his fondness for lettering a fuller expression, Baskerville issued a card on which an advertisement was inscribed: "Grave Stones cut, in any of the Hands, by John Baskerville, Writing Master." Two examples of this work came down to modern times, and show no slight skill and knowledge of calligraphy. In these stones the basic principles on which his famous type design eventually rested may be easily traced. One of them stood in

the churchyard at Edgbaston, and the other, formerly in the church of Handsworth, is said to have been purchased by Baskerville after his rise to affluence, and kept in his luxurious mansion as a souvenir of his early struggles. In spite of the vainglorious attributes he displayed in later years, he was never ashamed of his humble beginnings.

Even with his added avocation, Baskerville's income did not correspond with his growing ambitions, and he cast his eye about to see how he could improve his condition. It so happened that a man named John Taylor had come to Birmingham about the same time that Baskerville did, and had established there a japanning business. The novelty of his highly enamelled, painted snuff boxes and trays brought him immediate prosperity, and Taylor's modest shop had already grown to considerable proportions. Baskerville carefully examined these snuff boxes, curious to learn the secret of wealth they seemed to contain. He knew that he was more skilled in lettering and decorating than any of Taylor's workmen, and he became convinced that if he could solve the secret of the varnish, which gave to the japanned articles their greatest charm, he could improve upon the product of the Taylor business.

The story goes that Baskerville discovered a habit of Taylor's which gave him the opportunity

to learn the secret. Once in so often the japanner would make the rounds of the shops, ordering the various ingredients that went into his varnish. On one such occasion Baskerville carefully trailed him, and in each shop left instructions for Mr. Taylor's order to be duplicated and sent to his own house. In this way was disclosed not only what materials were used, but the exact proportion of each.

Whether this story be true or not, it is characteristic of Baskerville's ingenuity and of the thoroughness that entered into everything he undertook. He now abandoned his writing class, and left others to cut letters on gravestones. So many innovations were introduced at his newly established japanning shop, and his goods were so far superior to the Taylor product, that the erstwhile footman soon found himself in comfortable circumstances. In 1742 he secured a patent for making thin metal plates, which were varnished and japanned to "produce fine glowing Mohogany Colour and Black, no way inferior to the most perfect India goods, or an imitation of Tortoise shell which greatly excels Nature, both in Colour and Hardness." Within a few years he had amassed a sufficient fortune to warrant the erection of an imposing house, called Easy Hill, at an expense of £6000.

Derrick, writing to the Earl of Cork in 1760, gives a graphic account of the Baskerville home: "His apartments are elegant; his staircase is particularly curious; and the room in which he dines, and calls a smoking room, is very handsome. The grate and furniture belonging to it are, I think, of bright wrought iron, and cost him a round sum . . . This ingenious artist carries on a great trade in the japan way, in which he shewed me several useful articles, such as candlesticks, stands, salvers, waiters, bread baskets, tea boards, &c., elegantly designed and highly finished. Baskerville is a great cherisher of genius, which, wherever he finds it, he loses no opportunity of cultivating."

Here, with his wife and step-children, Baskerville maintained an establishment in keeping with that of a successful business man. He was determined to force his neighbors to take him seriously. His favorite costume was a green coat edged with narrow gold lace; a scarlet waistcoat, lavishly trimmed with gold; and a small, round hat similarly decorated. Not content with making his personal apparel such as to attract attention, he had a gorgeous chariot built, in which he drove about Birmingham behind cream-colored horses caparisoned with net hangings. The coach itself was a super-product of his japanning establishment, the

panels being emblazoned with decorations of flowers and naked cupids. Unfortunately, Baskerville's neighbors were not impressed as he thought they should be by these external evidences of commercial success, and the records are filled with correspondence and court proceedings which show the prospective master printer to have been a past master in the use of vituperative abuse.

With personal characteristics such as these, one would scarcely look for such a complete revolution as Baskerville occasioned in the making of books. He was a middle-aged man, with ample fortune and a profitable business, when his attention was suddenly attracted by the type faces being cut by William Caslon in London. This was an undertaking that distinctly interested him, for it recalled those earlier days when he himself had designed graceful letters, in the execution of which he had found far more satisfaction than in the less artistic but more profitable business of japanning.

The specimen sheet of types issued by William Caslon in 1737 marks the beginning of better things in the making of books, and the first appearance of England as a factor in any phase of the art of printing. At the turn of the century, practically all the type used in England was being imported from Holland; since the cutting of the Caslon faces, there has never been any necessity for

English printers to seek adequate types beyond domestic production.

William Caslon was born in 1692 at Cradley, in Worcestershire, and was apprenticed to a London engraver who made a specialty of ornamenting gun barrels and locks. After serving his time, the young man set himself up in a shop of his own, continuing to practise the engraving he had learned, and making tools for binders. Sometimes he was asked to cut lettering for bindings, or to cut a punch for some special character of type. From this came an order for a font of Arabic, and the story goes that when he submitted a sample sheet of the new Oriental letters, he added his own name, cut in Roman characters of such beauty that he was urged to complete the font. From this time on the Caslon designs dominated English printing, until Baskerville's innovations forced them for a time into the background.

The more carefully Baskerville looked into the Caslon types the more interested he became. Just as he had seen an opportunity to improve on the Taylor trays and snuff boxes, he now felt that he could produce a better letter than Caslon's. "Amongst the several mechanical Arts that have engaged my attention," he wrote, "there is no one which I have pursued with so much steadiness and pleasure as that of Letter Founding. Having

been an early admirer of the beauty of Letters, I became insensibly desirous of contributing to the perfection of them. I formed to myself Ideas of greater accuracy than had yet appeared, and have endeavoured to produce a Sett of Types according to what I conceived to be their true proportion. Mr. Caslon is an Artist to whom the Republic of Learning has great obligations; his ingenuity has left a fairer copy for my emulation than any other master."

This was the second accident that turned Baskerville into a new path, and eventually resulted in rescuing the art of printing from the depths to which it had fallen, making possible the splendid Baskerville *Virgil* of 1757 and successive masterpieces. Except for the experience in the little writing school, such proficiency in the art of letter designing would never have been developed; without the work of Caslon, the incentive for applying this proficiency might never have suggested itself.

Baskerville realized that if he were going to produce a superior face of type letters, he must protect himself by making certain that they were well printed. In the books of his day the ink was of inferior quality, and the type page appeared to poorer advantage than the types warranted because of the wretched quality of the paper upon which it was printed. This was of such absorbent nature

that the ink sank into it, leaving a dull, gray color instead of the sharp-cut, brilliant black of the early master printers. The japanner, who aspired to be a type designer, suddenly awoke to the fact that to achieve his ideals he must become a full-fledged printer, controlling the quality of the ink, the paper, and the presswork. The tremendously enlarged proportions of the undertaking might easily have caused another man to abandon the project — but obstacles always proved incentives to Baskerville, and he plunged into his new profession with characteristic energy.

It required more than seven years for Baskerville to complete to his own satisfaction the experiments necessary to establish his Press. At first glance, there is a general similarity between the design of his type and Caslon's, but a closer analysis discloses that Baskerville approached his task from the standpoint of the writing master rather than from that of the typographer. In a way, it was a return to the early idea that a good handwritten letter was equally good when cut in metal. The ultra-refinement of the Baskerville characters produced a delicate effect, but the test of retrospection has demonstrated that the design is too exact, too close to the precision of the engraved letter, to be wholly satisfying to the eye. It was the first time a Roman type face had shown a

tendency to depart from the basic principles of the old-style line established by Nicolas Jenson in the fifteenth century, and the innovation pointed the way toward the "modern" type designs shortly to be introduced by Didot and Bodoni.

The appearance of Baskerville's first specimen sheets caused a riot of discussion. Those who liked the type were enthusiastic in their praise; those who did not like it went to equal extremes in denouncing it. The enmities occasioned by Baskerville's aggressive personality became immediately apparent, and there were many critics who so resented the appearance of a rival to Caslon that they were unfairly biased in their estimates. Throughout the whole controversy, Benjamin Franklin was Baskerville's profound admirer and friend. Franklin once sent him a letter which discloses how strong these prejudices were:

CRAVEN STREET, LONDON, 1760

DEAR SIR, —

Let me give you a pleasant instance of the prejudice some have entertained against your work. Soon after I returned, discoursing with a gentleman concerning the artists of Birmingham, he said you would be the means of blinding all the readers of the nation, for the strokes of your letters being too thin and narrow, hurt the eye, and he could

never read a line of them without pain. "I thought," said I, "you were going to complain of the gloss on the paper some object to." "No, no," said he; "I have heard that mentioned, but it is not that: it is in the form and cut of the letters themselves; they have not that height and thickness of the stroke which makes the common printing so much more comfortable to the eye." You see this gentleman was a *connoisseur*. In vain I endeavoured to support your character against the charge; he knew what he felt, and could see the reason of it, and several other gentlemen among his friends had made the same observation, etc. Yesterday he called to visit me, when, mischievously bent to try his judgement, I stepped into my closet, tore off the top of Mr. Caslon's Specimen, and produced it to him as yours, brought with me from Birmingham, saying, I had been examining it, since he spoke to me, and could not for my life perceive the disproportion he mentioned, desiring him to point it out to me. He readily undertook it, and went over the several founts, showing me everywhere what he thought instances of that disproportion; and declared that he could not then read the specimen without feeling very strongly the pain he had mentioned to me. I spared him that time the confusion of being told that these were the types he had been reading all his life, with so

much ease to his eyes; the types his adored Newton is printed with, on which he has pored not a little; nay, the very types his own book is printed with (for he is himself an author), and yet never discovered the painful disproportion in them till he thought they were yours.

I am, etc.

B. FRANKLIN

Baskerville himself was satisfied with the finished appearance of his characters, "I cannot forebear," he says in a letter to Dodsley in 1752, "saying they please me, as I can make nothing more correct, nor shall you see anything of mine much less so."

During this long period of experimenting with his type design and cutting, Baskerville applied himself also to other problems which had to be solved. The paper was of paramount importance. In connection with this he had a genuine inspiration: if the paper could be made less absorbent, the ink would lie upon the surface and thus retain the beauty of its solid black — and what more effective means could be devised to accomplish this than to treat the sheets with a thinned varnish, and then to press them between heated metal plates, manufactured under his patent in his own japanning establishment? Then came the question of

the printing. The hand presses then in vogue were improved upon. "My presses," he wrote, "are exactly on the same construction of other people's. But perhaps more accurate than any ever formed since the invention of the art of printing. To explain myself: I have been able to produce three more perfect plans than have before appeared in a letter press. . . All my presses were made at home under my own inspection."

The ink was manufactured after a recipe resulting from Baskerville's long experiments. "He took of the finest and oldest linseed oil three gallons," Hansard records. "This was put into a vessel capable of holding four times the quantity, and boiled with a long-continued fire till it acquired a certain thickness or tenacity, according to the quality of the work it was intended to print, and which was judged of by putting small quantities upon a stone to cool, and then taking it up between the fingers and the thumb; on opening which, if it drew into a thread an inch long or more, it was considered sufficiently boiled. This mode of boiling can only be acquired by long practice, and requires particular skill and care in the person who superintends the operation, as, for want of this, the most serious consequences have very frequently occurred; the oil thus prepared was suffered to cool, and had then a small quantity

of black or amber resin dissolved in it, after which it was allowed some months to subside; it was then mixed with the fine black, before named, to a proper thickness, and ground for use."

"It was not until Baskerville," Hansard adds, "that any attention was turned to this most essential article. His scrutinizing eye was always in search after improvement, and his mind, quick as his vision, ready to mature the first idea. It was reserved for him to discover, after . . . a lapse of time, a superior kind of black for the purpose required, and to this success may be attributed in a great measure the superiority of his printing."

With his types cut, his ink and paper perfected, and his press set up, John Baskerville in 1754 announced his first book — a *Virgil* in royal quarto; but it was not until three years later that the completed work appeared. "It is not my desire to print many books," he wrote, "but such only as are books of Consequence, of intrinsic merit, or established Reputation, and which the public may be pleased to see in an elegant dress, and to purchase at such a price as will repay the extraordinary care and experience that must necessarily be bestowed upon them." As to the style of the typography, Baskerville had learned from some source the value of simplicity. While other books of his time were prostituted by incongruous woodcuts,

decorations, and atrocious typographic flowers, with no attempt at coördination with the type, the new master printer secured his effect by using ample margins and by keeping the type page itself from being over-crowded. This principle was also carried out in his splendid title pages — the best produced up to that time — where the amount of lettering was reduced to a minimum, in marked contrast with the heavily worded titles which were characteristic of the period.

It is difficult to determine Baskerville's status as a scholar, owing to the personal prejudices of his contemporaries. What little is known of his history seems to indicate that he was wholly self-educated, but that does not necessarily warrant Mark Noble's statement that he was "ignorant of literature to a wonderful degree." Such of his letters as are preserved, notably those to Horace Walpole, are as grammatically correct and well written as those of educated men of his period. Dr. Alexander Carlyle records, "He dined with us . . . and acquitted himself so well that Robertson pronounced him a man of genius, while James Adam and I thought him a prating pedant."

At all events, Baskerville appreciated the importance of accurate texts. In his Proposal for his first volume he announced that "by the advice and assistance of several learned men," he planned to

issue " from the Cambridge edition, corrected with all possible care, an elegant edition of *Virgil*." As a further precaution in reading the proof, he demanded that " two people must be concerned; the one must name every letter, capital, point, reference, accent, etc.; that is, in English, must spell every part of every word distinctly, and note down every difference in a book prepared on purpose." With these declared intentions, Baskerville may perhaps be absolved from personal responsibility for the glaring errors which appear in some of his later classics.

Robert Dodsley, London publisher and playwright, was another admirer of Baskerville, and Dodsley was of no little service to the printer with his advice and in his efforts to place the Baskerville publications on the market. The Birmingham printer surely stood in need of all the assistance he could receive! The expenses incurred in cutting his types and in conducting his experiments in ink, paper, and presses, had proved a disastrous drain upon the resources of the japanning business, and with the publication of his first volume Baskerville found the publishers and booksellers almost solidly arrayed against him. This was the price he paid for the patronizing attitude he assumed and the antagonizing personality which entered into all his business intercourse.

In spite of the discouragements, the *Virgil* appeared in 1757, and with its publication Baskerville's reputation as a master printer was established. His rivals and critics might laugh at his vainglorious boasts and attack him for his bad manners, but they could not gainsay the fact that he had made good on all his claims. From that moment the Caslon types lost their popularity — not to be regained for a hundred years. The hot-pressed paper, far from "blinding all the readers in the nation," was admired and imitated, and was the forerunner of the modern "English finish" and "coated" stock. The ink established a new standard, and the presswork, "strictly in Register, one line falling upon the Back of the other, which preserves the Colour and Beauty of the Whole," is a model for all time.

The bookloving world now began to sing the praises of the new master in the art of printing, who, for the first time, had given England the supremacy. "His types are cut with much spirit," wrote Fournier, the famous French type founder, "his Italic being the best in any foundry in England . . . his editions printed from these new types . . . are real masterpieces. Some are upon hot-pressed paper, and although they are a little fatiguing to the eye, we cannot deny that they are the most beautiful things to be seen in this sort

of work." Benjamin Franklin subscribed for six copies of the *Virgil*, and pronounced it "the most curiously printed of any book hitherto done in the world." The Abbé de Fontenai describes the paper as "so glossy and of such a perfect polish that we would suppose it made of silk rather than of linen." Macaulay referred to the *Virgil* as "the first of that series of books which went forth to astonish all the librarians of the world."

The decade that followed the publication of the *Virgil* — 1757–1766 — produced a succession of Baskerville volumes which demonstrated that the new Press was founded upon sound principles. The Birmingham printer had built on an enduring basis. There was the *Milton* of 1758, which marks the first affiliation Baskerville was able to make with a London publisher; in 1760 appeared the *Book of Common Prayer* — a monument to his unsatisfactory experience as Printer to the University of Cambridge; there was the splendid edition of *Addison*, in four volumes, printed in 1761 for the Tonsons, who continued to act as his publishers; a year later appeared Baskerville's *Horace*, the most beautiful of all his publications, in which he gratified his ambition to produce a pocket classic along the lines of the Elzevir editions, but better conceived.

Baskerville received far greater recognition in

foreign countries than in England. The jealousy and ill will of his rivals were aggravated by his success, and their antagonism was a factor in preventing him from receiving adequate financial returns. Except for the continuing profits from the japanning business, the creation of typographic masterpieces must long since have ceased. "I must starve," Baskerville wrote Franklin, "had I no other dependence." Again, the harassed printer wrote Horace Walpole, "It is surely a particular hardship that I should not get Bread in my own country after having acquired the Reputation of excelling in the most useful Art Known to Mankind."

Disheartened, and perhaps questioning how long the japanning business could stand the financial strain, Baskerville at various times tried to sell his types and equipment to France, Russia, and Denmark. The greatest appreciation of his work came from France, and at one time, in 1767, it seemed likely that an arrangement might be completed to make the transfer to Paris. Benjamin Franklin acted as Baskerville's envoy, but the Royal treasury was too impoverished to permit the necessary outlay.

Piqued by this new disappointment, Baskerville announced his retirement, and he turned the Press over to his senior workman, Robert Martin. This

caused unrestrained delight to his persistent critics and detractors. They tried to twist his abandoning of his projects into an admission of defeat, but the splendid and enduring monuments already created could not be talked away by jealous tongues. The explanation undoubtedly lies in the financial aspect. Baskerville was convinced at last that he could only continue to gratify his expression in the Art of Printing by encroaching dangerously on his reduced capital; and he had no idea of ending his life in poverty. The fact that at his death but £12,000 remained intact shows that from a practical standpoint he acted with wisdom and foresight.

Just what the arrangement was between Baskerville and Martin is not clear; but in 1769, when the great printer discovered that his successor was playing hand in glove with his deadliest and most vituperative enemy, Nicholas Boden, in producing a *Bible*, he returned to the command of the Press with all his old-time fury, issued a competing edition, far inferior to his Cambridge *Bible*, but much more successful, and fought Boden to a standstill in the newspapers, in court, and in the bookshops. From that time until his death on January 8, 1775, Baskerville remained the head of his establishment. About two years before he died he brought out a superb edition of *Ariosto* for the Brothers Molini of Paris.

The records show that a few months after Baskerville's death his widow sold such printed stock as remained in the warehouse to a Worcester bookseller. She experienced more difficulty in realizing on the types. A few fonts were sold at auction to English printers, but it was not until three years later that the bulk of the material was purchased for £3000 by Beaumarchais, the French dramatist, on behalf of the Société Litteraire-Typographique. The chief use made by the Frenchman of this type was in a pretentious but ill-fated edition of Voltaire's *Works*, which was not completed until 1789. For a long time it was believed that the Baskerville types were melted down to make bullets for the French revolutionists, but later evidence shows that they existed and were in use as late as 1806. Thus, through the indifference of the times, England lost her opportunity to preserve the equipment that had brought typographic glory to her for the first time. The only Baskerville relics now held in England are a few Greek types at the Clarendon Press, Oxford — examples of the only characters the great master cut which were unsuccessful.

Ill fortune continued to pursue Baskerville even after his death. In his will he stipulated that " the Devise of my Goods and Chattles is on this Express Condition, that my Wife, in Concert with my

Executors, do Cause my Body to be Buried in a Conical Building on my own premises, in a vault which I have prepared for it." In carrying out these instructions, it was found necessary to place the body in an upright position. Here it rested for nearly fifty years, in spite of the fact that Baskerville House, as Easy Hill had come to be called, had long since passed out of the hands of the family, and had been razed to the ground by fire during the Birmingham riots of 1791. In 1821 some workmen, engaged in digging gravel on the premises, discovered the leaden coffin, which was disinterred, and the remains were found to be in an extraordinary state of preservation. For the next four or five years the casket was placed on exhibition in a plumber's shop in Birmingham, admission being charged to the curious.

In 1829 John Rylands, who had purchased Baskerville House, indignant over the lack of respect being shown to the memory of the famous printer, took it upon himself to put an end to the exhibition of the remains. St. Philip's Church, in Birmingham, refused to allow the body to be reinterred in its churchyard because of Baskerville's alleged atheism, and a like refusal would probably have been given by Christ Church except that, by a subterfuge, the coffin was actually placed in a vault there before the higher authorities became aware

of it. This explains why no record was made of the burial, and why all trace of the location of the coffin was lost. It was not until 1893 that the remains were discovered, identified, and marked with a proper inscription. But Nemesis was still to pursue the unfortunate printer. Only a few years later, the expansion of Birmingham made it necessary to wipe out Christ Church. Again the leaden casket was moved — this time to the catacombs of the Church of England Cemetery at Warstone Lane. Here it now rests in — it is to be hoped — its final burial place.

The charge of atheism, which prevented Baskerville's body from being placed beside that of his wife in St. Philip's churchyard, was the result of his "free thinking," and especially because of a clause in his will which stipulated that he should not be buried in consecrated ground: "I have a Hearty Contempt of all Superstition the Farce of a Consecrated Ground, the Irish Barbarism of Sure and Morality casually Intermixt with It to be the most Impudent Abuse of Common Sense which Ever was Invented to Befool Mankind. I Expect some srewd Remark will be made on this my Declaration by the Ignorant and Bigotted who cannot Distinguish between Religion and Superstition, and are Taught to Believe morality (by which I understand all the Duties a man owes to God and

his fellow Creatures) is not Sufficient to entitle him to Divine favour with professing to believe as they Call It Certain Absurd Doctrines and mysteries of which they have no more Conception than a Horse."

"John Baskerville," writes Read, "was a bundle of paradoxes. He was an exemplary son and an affectionate, judicious husband, but full of personal animosities. . . In person he was a shrivelled old coxcomb, but in spirit he was a worker of unquenchable energy. Peevish in temper, he was a charming host. . . The one thing that reconciled all was his strong personality. Whatever else he was, he was never commonplace. Whatever he did bore the living marks of John Baskerville." Dibdin estimates him as "a wonderful creature as an artist, but a vain and silly man."

It is interesting to conjecture what Baskerville might have accomplished had his disposition been such as to invite coöperation instead of attracting antagonism. Perhaps it is fair to assume that this pugnacious attribute made him what he was. A gentle nature would scarcely have stooped to the subterfuge (supposing the story to be true) practised in discovering Mr. Taylor's secrets of japanning. Without the substantial means supplied by this commercial enterprise, the Baskerville Press could not have come into being. Except for his love

of competition he would hardly have entered the lists against so able a typefounder as William Caslon.

The fact remains that John Baskerville, regardless of his personal eccentricities, was the one influence that brought about the renaissance of printing in the eighteenth century, and laid the foundations for the three great printers — Firmin Didot, in Paris; Giambattista Bodoni, in Parma; and Joachim Ibarra, in Madrid — who were to follow him. His work — original and artistic in conception, painstaking and thorough in its execution — has its own place for its own merits among the typographical monuments of the world. Dibdin said of him, " He united in a singularly happy manner the elegance of Plantin with the clearness of the Elzevirs." He did more than this: like the humanists of the fourteenth century, he accepted truth wherever he found it, unprejudiced as to its source; and, having absorbed it, gave it out again in his typography, made richer by his personal interpretation. His contribution to the evolution of the Book is inestimable and enduring.

VII · DIDOT, BODONI, IBARRA

The Birth of Modern Bookbuilding

VII · DIDOT, BODONI, IBARRA

The Birth of Modern Bookbuilding

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The work of John Baskerville was more fully appreciated in France than in any other country, so it was natural that it should have produced its greatest effect on French bookmaking. Baskerville, as an Englishman, was ahead of his time. In all the early history of the Book, England was curiously behindhand. Even as late as the sixteenth century there were comparatively few private libraries in England. During the reign of Henry VIII the English printers and binders found it necessary to secure legislation to prevent the importation of Italian books, which was threatening their very existence. The Venetian binders practised the art of gold tooling for half a century before it was introduced into England. Baskerville failed in his efforts to develop good taste in books in his own country because at that time good taste did not exist. The English people of the period knew little about fine printing and cared less. A law was still in force in England which required a certificate for the possession of presses or types, and the privi-

leged printer, once protected in his monopoly, had no incentive to consider the quality of his work. The English printers, stocked with their Dutch types, saw no reason to discard them for new-fangled improvements, particularly as the reading public as a whole was perfectly satisfied with the style and quality of bookmaking as it existed. The masterpieces of Baskerville appealed only to that limited number who could understand the underlying principles on which they rested — who saw in them a veritable renaissance in typographic art.

During the whole of the Baskerville period volumes were being made well enough in France, but because they so closely mirrored the French fashions of the day they classified more as boudoir and drawing-room accessories than as books. The eighteenth century found the French people tired of the pompous majesty and heavy dignity of Louis XIV. Under the regency of the Duc d'Orléans the spontaneous gaiety of French manners returned, and found its expression in art and literature as well as in the styles of wearing apparel. What more natural than that this joyousness of life should show itself in the physical *format* of books?

Books were the vogue in the eighteenth century, but only if they conformed to the styles of the day. The history and precedent of the art of printing

were forgotten in the desire for dainty, decorated volumes with " pretty " head- and tailpieces, idealistic vignettes, and engraved illustrations. The fad of book collecting was rampant, and *dilettante* amateurs employed the swelling ranks of designers to engrave their bookplates. In the illustrations of books idyllic scenes were portrayed where exquisitely dressed shepherds bowed with courtly gallantry to shepherdesses with powdered *coiffures* and beribboned gowns. Le Brun had given way to Watteau.

The business of bookmaking had assumed a distinctly national flavor. The printing establishments were no longer complete when equipped merely with types and presses — each now had to have designers, engravers, and plate printers as members of its regular staff. Class distinction in making books became marked. The booksellers were the important personages; then came the printers, who were generously classed as artists; while last, poorly paid and little respected, came the designers and engravers. The artists were in a class by themselves. Gravelot, Eisen, Cochin, and Moreau supplied graceful but affected illustrations for volumes of the time, in which the former coördination of woodcut artist and typographer was conspicuously lacking. The Book became a composite of various arts — a backward step that was

to serve as a handicap to the expression of printing as an art down to the time of William Morris. These French objects of contemporary art were never accepted by the real booklovers of their period, even though they served their part in giving pleasure to the *dilettante* society of the time.

As the eighteenth century advanced, the quality of bookmaking became better, and the styles of typography and decoration were improved by the elimination of much that was grotesque. The younger Moreau and St. Aubin were later artists who contributed to the enrichment of the *Works* of Molière and the *Chansons* of De Lormel — but still after the French style. Moreau was among the first to make his decorations illustrative of the text. It was natural that when booklovers had become satiated with the daintiness and elegance of the current book design, and had realized that with all its graceful garlands of roses, cupids, and symbols, French typography was as effeminate as it was conventional and false, they should turn to the Baskerville type designs with a feeling that the Englishman, in modernizing the old-style letter, had expressed what the French had really had in mind and failed to accomplish. Then came the French Revolution, and the interruption of all progress in the arts.

During this same period another influence was

at work which was to affect fashions in books. Not France alone, but all the world was becoming innoculated with the " classical " bacillus, which developed as a result of the excavations in Herculaneum and Pompeii. After the Revolution the infection spread. By 1790 sculptors, architects, and painters were basing their work on what they were pleased to call " Graeco-Roman " art. In England, Josiah Wedgewood named his pottery " Etruria." Etrurian designs appeared in the Sèvres porcelains in France, and fragments of Roman ruins and classical *motifs* were copied everywhere in popular *bric-à-brac* and household furniture. In 1796 Napoleon's armies occupied Rome, and many of the great masterpieces of ancient art were sent to Paris. The enflamed French people determined to make a revivified Rome out of their capital city. The classics themselves came in for an unwonted popularity, and these, of course, must be printed only in formal types.

Here was where Baskerville's design captivated the French taste, and when Firmin Ambroise Didot, in Paris, still further refined the Englishman's light strokes into a letter which possessed the actual precision of the engraver, freed from the effeminacy of the earlier French efforts, he was hailed as the greatest printer of any country and of any age.

The three countries that responded particularly to this appeal of Graeco-Roman art were France, where expression came through the printed works of the Didots; Italy, where Giambattista Bodoni issued volumes in formal types of his own design; and in Spain, where Joachim Ibarra, with less success, reflected in his printed books the influence of Bodoni. Inasmuch as the birth of modern printing and the popularity of the so-called "modern" type faces (in which the small, finishing strokes of the letter are squared, and emphasis given to the thick and thin strokes) resulted from the joint productions of these three sources, they must always be considered side by side.

The House of Didot really begins with François (1689–1759), whose name is still associated with the publication of the works of his intimate friend, the Abbé Prévost. François had eleven children, two of whom followed in his typographical footsteps — François Ambroise (1720–1804) and Pierre François (1732–1793). François Ambroise made several real contributions to the advancement of the Book. He invented the *presse à un coup*, on which the impression was secured by a single pull instead of by a series of separate strikings; he modified Fournier's "point system," by which the various sizes of type were designated by mathematical proportions instead of by the

more romantic but less practical arbitrary names of "Cicero," "Gaillarde," or "Saint-Augustin"; he improved upon Baskerville's hot-pressed paper in his *papier vélin de France*, made in the Johannot mill at Annonay; he designed and had cut by Waflard the famous Didot type, to which reference has already been made. The best known of François Ambroise's editions are perhaps the Greek *Longus* (1778), Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1784–86), and the *Homer* of 1787–1788. His texts were famous for their accuracy. In 1783, François Ambroise was commissioned by Louis XIV to print a specially prepared edition of those volumes which were to be used for the education of the Dauphin.

Benjamin Franklin visited the printing office of François Ambroise in 1780. It is related that while there the American Ambassador to France approached one of the presses, and struck off several impressions from the type with such workmanlike proficiency as to cause astonishment. "Don't be surprised," Franklin said in response to the expression which came on the faces of those about him — "this is my real trade."

So impressed was Franklin with the personality and accomplishments of François Ambroise, that in 1785 he placed his grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, with him as an apprentice. The notes that

the boy made in his diary give an idea of the esteem in which François Ambroise was held at that time: "My grandpapa," the boy writes, "has prevailed upon Mr. Didot, the best printer of this age and even the best that has ever been seen, to consent to take me into his house for some time in order to teach me his art. I take my meals at his house and sleep at the house of Mrs. Le Roy, a friend of my grandpapa; I went thither today with my cousin, and I became acquainted with his family and something more. He combines in his house engraving, the forge, the foundry, and the printing office; it is a very amiable family, as it seems to me; the meals are frugal."

Pierre François Didot, brother of François Ambroise, was named Printer to the Dauphin (afterwards Louis XVIII) in 1759. He issued some splendid editions, — notably the *Imitation* of 1788, and the folio *Télémaque*, — but his real contribution was the establishment of a paper mill at Essonne. From this beginning, the Didots became the most famous paper makers in France.

Although the Didots were printing in France during all the period of Baskerville's achievements in England, at the time when the Birmingham printer became famous the early Didot volumes were not in keeping with the flowery taste that prevailed before the Revolution, and thus attracted

less attention than they deserved. These Frenchmen, however, possessed the foresight to appreciate what Baskerville's contribution to the Book really meant, and to realize that the opportunity would surely come for them to bring to France a return of that glory which the Étiennes had earlier contributed. Fortunately for the art of printing they possessed the ability to make their vision practical.

The two later Didots who came particularly into the picture were both sons of François Ambroise — Pierre *l'âiné* (1761–1853), so called to distinguish him from his less famous uncle, and Firmin (1764–1836). Pierre represented the publishing interest of the House of Didot, while Firmin was the practical genius who still further improved upon the type his father had designed, invented the epoch-making process of stereotyping, and made several scholarly translations.

In 1830 Firmin was offered the directorship of the Imprimerie Royale, which he declined because the Government would not agree to his conditions that competition with the printers of Paris be discontinued, and that its productions be made examples of printing as an art. He was not content to consider the Royal printing office merely as a glorified manufacturing establishment, but insisted that it be placed upon the same artistic basis as

the institutions of Gobelins and of Sèvres. He served several years in the French Chamber of Deputies; he was decorated with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor; and his work was awarded gold medals wherever exhibited. After Firmin's death, the French Government placed his bust in one of the rooms of the Imprimerie Royale, his portrait hangs in the Museum at Versailles and at the Louvre. Here, at least, was a prophet who received honor in his own country.

The contributions of the Didots to the Book were mounting up. Their type carried the formal design of the Baskerville letters to its extremest point, and each character was cut with such absolute precision that the letters seemed the product of an engraver's tools. The experiments made in the vellum paper by François Ambroise at Annonay resulted in the manufacture of the most beautiful sheets of hand-made paper that could be produced. Baskerville's superb ink was duplicated; alliances were made with the most famous artists of the day for illustrations — to be splendidly engraved upon copper; improvements were made in the presses, and the presswork of the Didots — where the type just bit into the paper enough to become a part of it — astonished the world. With the publication of the famous *Louvre* editions by Pierre *l'âiné* and Firmin — so called

because the Government, recognizing their efforts to emulate the achievements of the Étiennes, granted the Didots those quarters in the Louvre which were formerly occupied by the Imprimerie Royale — the Didots became supreme in the art of printing, a position which was made still more secure by the publication of their magnificent *Racine* in 1801. This was pronounced "the most perfect typographical production of any country and of all the ages."

That the Didots realized the importance of practical knowledge is shown by this quotation from a statement made by Pierre *l'âiné:* "A master printer must be familiar with the mechanical processes if he is to apply them effectively to his art. Thus he must have performed the manual labors of his workmen in order to direct them properly and secure the best results. I am particularly impressed with this necessity, even at my age and with my experience, when I see my father still striving to perfect himself."

Frey has left us a graphic description of the precautions taken by Pierre *l'âiné* to secure accuracy in his texts: "Our celebrated printer," he says, "shuts himself up in a room apart from noise and interruption. There, surrounded by an extensive library, he reads aloud, in a clear voice, speaking very slowly, so that he may be able to scrutinize

the letters one by one, his daughter attentively following the copy. . . Then he has a second proof read by one of our good grammarians. The press revise is compared and re-read with great care. Then, after the edition has been run off, the sheets are again re-read by two persons . . . important errors being corrected by printing cancels."

Pierre *l'âiné* was decorated by Napoleon and by Louis XVIII. At the age of seventy-three he was given the cross of the Legion of Honor. He retired from business in 1819.

By 1825 the Didot Press, under the direction of Jules, son of Pierre *l'âiné*, was seriously affected by the large number of competing establishments in Paris, and the situation was aggravated by an incurable disease its director had contracted. In an effort to enlarge his business horizon, Jules established a Press in Brussels; but the results did not justify the heavy expense. Fortunately for him, the Belgian Government eventually purchased the plant, and made of it the foundation of their Royal printing office.

In the fourth generation, two of Firmin Didot's sons upheld the traditions of the family — Hyacinthe (1794–1880) and Ambroise Firmin (1790–1876). The latter was one of the significant figures of the Book during the nineteenth century. Brought up under the personal and sympathetic guidance of

his accomplished father, he came in contact at an early age with the famous contemporaries of Firmin, giving him a wide knowledge of the world which added to the position his talents would have won for him. His early association with the Didot Press was in the mechanical end, during which period he introduced into France the famous English Stanhope press — the forerunner of the power press which was to supersede the hand press. Ambroise Firmin demonstrated his inheritance as a type designer by cutting the "English cursive" — a face which attracted universal attention. As a publisher, Ambroise Firmin increased the reputation of the House by issuing several important works, and he contributed to the literature of the Book by his splendid volumes on *Gutenberg* (1863), *Essai sur l'histoire de la gravure sur bois* (1863) and *Alde Manuce et l'héllenisme à Venise* (1875). He was one of the greatest book collectors of his time, leaving a library that was sold, after his death, for the then enormous sum of $600,000. Ambroise Firmin was an officer of the Legion of Honor, and in 1855 succeeded his father as Printer to the Institute of France.

Of Pierre François' sons, Henri (1765–1852) produced a microscopic type that attracted much attention, and St. Leger (1767–1829) was the first to make paper in an endless roll. This innovation

caused a complete revolution in paper making, and proved most far-reaching in the evolution of printing.

By 1840 the affairs of the Didot Press, with more than a thousand employees in its various departments, had reached proportions beyond the ability of the family to conduct, so it was decided to turn the bookstore, the printing office, the stereotype foundry, the paper mills, and the ink factory over to an incorporated company. This became known as the *Société de la fonderie générale*. As an inevitable result, the quality of the workmanship suffered, while the business of manufacturing and publishing prospered. The later Didots became more interested in the business than in the artistic development.

During this same period Bodoni was producing volumes in Italy. Giambattista was the son of a printer, and was born in the Piedmontese town of Saluzzo on February 16, 1740. He served his apprenticeship in Rome, having peculiarly intimate and agreeable relations with his master Ruggeri, the director of the Press of the Propaganda Office. So deep was the boy's affection for Ruggeri that when the older man committed suicide the youth found further work at Rome intolerable. He gave up his position and started on his way to England

to seek his fortune. While visiting his parents at Saluzzo, he became the victim of a serious illness, and his enforced sojourn there gave Duke Ferdinand of Parma an opportunity to invite the youthful printer, then twenty-eight years of age, to become the head of the Stamperia Reale, at Parma. This was really a private printing establishment, producing Court documents or volumes of particular interest to its patron, Duke Ferdinand.

Bodoni accepted the offer, equipped himself with French types made by Fournier in Paris, and supplemented them by types of his own design. At first these were flatly based upon the French models, but gradually he felt the influence of Baskerville, and the demand for the formal types called for by the popularity of Graeco-Roman art. By degrees the Bodoni letter assumed the same refined classical tendency that expressed itself in the characters designed by Firmin Didot; in fact, the similarity between these two type faces is so marked as to suggest a possibility that the designs might have been made in collaboration.

By 1788 the Bodoni printing office in Parma had become celebrated. In 1775 Giambattista had printed the *Epithalamia* in twenty-five languages, in honor of the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont with Princess Clotilde of France, which had attracted world-wide attention. Visitors to Parma

considered their experiences incomplete without a visit to his workshop. Arthur Young, writing in December, 1789, records the fact that he went "to the celebrated *reale typografica* of Signore Bodoni, who shewed me many works of singular beauty. The types, I think, excel those of Didot at Paris, who likewise often crowds the letters close, as if to save paper. The *Daphne and Chloe* and the *Amynta* are beautifully executed; I bought the latter as a specimen of this celebrated Press, which really does honour to Italy. Signore Bodoni had the title of the printer to the king of Spain, but never received any salary, or even gratification, as I learned in Parma from another quarter; where I was also informed that the salary he has from the duke is only 150 *zechins*. His merit is great and distinguished, and his exertions are uncommon. He has 30,000 matrices of type. I was not a little pleased to find that he has met with the best sort of patron in Mr. Edward, the bookseller, at London, who has made a contract with him for an impression of two hundred and fifty of four Greek works, four Latin, and four Italian ones."

So famous had Bodoni become by 1790 that he was invited to start a Press at the Papal Court in Rome, but Duke Ferdinand would not consider the loss of so brilliant an ornament to Parma and to Piedmont. He provided additional resources for

the enlargement of Bodoni's horizon — a larger plant, moneys for further experimenting, and absolute freedom of action on the part of the printer. Up to this time Bodoni's volumes had been printed in Latin, Greek, or Italian; now he branched forth into French, German, Russian, and English. He was overwhelmed with honors: Carlos III of Spain made him Royal Printer, Carlos IV granted him a pension, as did also Napoleon Bonaparte and the Viceroy of India; special medals were struck off in his honor by the cities of Parma and of Paris. Benjamin Franklin, always interested in everything that went toward the advancement of the art of printing, corresponded with him, and encouraged him in his efforts. Bodoni died in Parma on November 30, 1813, and his funeral obsequies rivaled in magnificence those of a passing prince. His types and ornaments, together with a complete set of his publications, are still preserved in the Ducal Library at Parma.

The formality of Bodoni's volumes may be explained by the fact that he never looked upon himself as a printer to the people. He had received the plaudits of the great, and he catered to the tastes of the few. By this time there were books and to spare for the multitude, and the cheap, commonplace editions placed practically every author within the reach of the lean purse. There was no

call for the humanism that had entered into the purpose of Aldus Manutius and of Robert Étienne. Bodoni undertook to serve those who appreciated fine paper, careful typography, and skilful press-work, and possessed the means to pay for the cost which this luxury entailed. The Graeco-Roman art was still fashionable, and the patrons upon whom Bodoni depended went into ecstasies over the thick heavy-strokes and the alternating light-strokes of his letters, the sumptuous margins, and the return to the folio and quarto sizes of three centuries earlier.

While Pierre *l'âiné* and Firmin Didot were making their name famous in France, and Bodoni was establishing his reputation in Italy, Joachim Ibarra in Madrid produced his *Sallust* of 1772. This Spanish printer, who was born in Saragossa in 1725, at once became recognized all over Europe as a worthy competitor of his French and Italian rivals. Of his *Don Quixote,* Ibarra's finest example, the Chevalier de Bourgoing writes, in 1782, that it is " equally admirable for the quality of the ink, the beauty of the paper, the clearness of the character, and (is) to be compared with the finest productions of the kind in any other nation. . . Every connoisseur is acquainted with, and prefers to the edition of Baskerville, the *Sallust* . . .

and other works from the presses of Ibarra at Madrid, . . which are masterpieces of the typographical art, and will one day be sought after by posterity, as we now search for Elzevirs."

Ibarra also attracted the attention of Benjamin Franklin, who wrote: " A strong Emulation exists at Present between Paris and Madrid, with regard to beautiful printing. Here a M. Didot *le jeune* has a passion for the Art. . . He has executed several charming Editions. But the *Sallust* and the *Don Quixote* of Madrid are thought to excel them." Née de la Rochelle declares that " Ibarra carried the perfection of his art to a point until then unknown in Spain, and the emulation he inspired in his *confrères* caused greater advances in Typographic Art in twenty years than it had made in the two preceding centuries. He is distinguished for his magnificent editions, in which sumptuous engravings are combined with sumptuous types, great accuracy, and superior presswork."

Ibarra was more than a printer. His experiments in ink produced the highest quality ever used in Spain, and he invented a machine to hot-press sheets of paper such as Baskerville had so laboriously prepared by means of his japanned plates. Ibarra was appointed Court Printer to Carlos III, thus sharing Royal honors with Bodoni. He died in Madrid on November 23, 1785.

That all three of these printers were directly influenced by the work of John Baskerville is unquestioned, but it is more difficult to determine the relative influence that each of the three exerted on the other two. Ibarra undoubtedly received more than he gave. The intimate relations between the Spanish Court and Bodoni placed Ibarra in close touch with everything his Italian rival produced. But was Bodoni the Italian Didot, or was Didot the French Bodoni? The Italian undoubtedly possessed far more originality than either of his rivals, but the others were much more accurate in their texts. Firmin Didot himself, always a generous critic, says of Bodoni, "As a lover of literature, I condemn his editions; as a typographer, I admire them."

But it is really of slight importance which preceded or outranked the other two. The main fact is that all three, working separately at the same time in different countries, impelled by the same influence to greater effort in printing as an art, gave the best there was in them to the common cause of the Book, and by their combined efforts established it upon a modern basis. That these efforts were not sufficient to hold the art at the high point to which they lifted it cannot be considered their responsibility. The public they reached had not yet established its own basis, being unduly

influenced by conditions and circumstances that possessed no abiding principles. Who shall say that it was not a good thing for the Book to be shaken from its complacency in the old-style basis, even though the modern school failed to demonstrate its ability to supply something better? Out of the comparison each school learned much that was to its advantage, and discovered how jointly to contribute to the understanding which was to create modern volumes based upon the best of each.

VIII · WILLIAM MORRIS

The Art of Printing Comes Back into Its Own

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For half a century after the French Revolution the modern types, introduced by Didot, Bodoni, and Ibarra, held their popularity, and many type foundries, convinced that the old-style faces would never again be called for, even destroyed their punches and matrices. Had these prophets held true visions the outlook for the future of the Book would have been even more dismal than it then appeared. The formal modern characters had been all very well when employed by real masters in the art of printing; but they offered a sorry spectacle during the first half of the nineteenth century in the volumes produced by incompetent printers.

The one bright spot in this drab period in the history of the Book is the work which Charles Whittingham the younger produced at the Chiswick Press in London — particularly for William Pickering, the famous English publisher of his time, whose device was a revival of the old Dolphin and Anchor first used by Aldus. Pickering was undoubtedly the inspiration for Whitting-

ham's work, but the latter fortunately possessed sufficient vision and typographic ability to carry out the publisher's ideas with success.

Whittingham is entitled to the credit for having revived the use of old-style type. In 1844, he had the courage to insist that while the modern face approached the brilliancy of an engraved letter and offered definite advantages in the condensed space it occupied, the design could not in any way be compared, so far as beauty was concerned, with that of the old-style letters cut by Caslon. About that time the Longmans, in London, turned over the *Diary of Lady Willoughby* to Whittingham for manufacture. Whittingham persuaded the publishers that the old-style type would produce a far handsomer volume than the modern, and this small quarto was brought out at the Chiswick Press as a demonstration of Whittingham's claims. The result was an almost immediate return on the part of booklovers to their former preference for the old-style designs in all volumes except in those intended for a merely utilitarian purpose, such as school books and the like.

During this first half of the nineteenth century still another influence was definitely at work to prepare the world for the renaissance of printing which William Morris was to create at the Kelmscott Press during the last decade of the century.

This was a spirit of definite esthetic discontent, scarcely appreciated at first, but steadily growing until the revolt became strong enough to make itself felt. John Ruskin was the leading spirit of this revolt.

Among those most deeply affected was William Morris, who, even as a young man, determined to make his life a protest against existing conditions. He felt keenly the contrast between the beauty in nature and the ugliness in the products of human labor. He made no secret of the fact that what he really aimed at was nothing less than the remaking of society, as this seemed to him the only way his ideal could ever be attained. He sought to express his passion for beauty in various ways: by writing poetry; by illuminating volumes handwritten by himself; by translations of the Icelandic sagas as well as of the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*; by designing wall papers, chintzes, carpets, and other household things in an attempt to revive their ancient beauty. He experimented in no less than twenty different crafts. At last, in 1890, Morris turned to the printed Book as yet another medium for conveying his artistic ideals to the world. At that time he was fifty-six years old. This was not a new idea. Nearly twenty years earlier he had made desultory typographical experiments, but they had not brought him satisfaction.

Morris was born on March 24, 1834, in Walthamstow, Essex, England. His father was a wealthy London bill broker, who died just before the son attained his twenty-first birthday, leaving Morris more or less his own master with an income that made it possible to gratify most of his desires. William Morris never attached much importance to what he called his "schooling," although Marlborough School, and Exeter College at Oxford, are perhaps entitled to more credit for his education than he ever gave them. He himself would have claimed that the greatest benefit he received at Oxford was the friendship he formed with Edward Burne-Jones.

During his second year at Oxford, he made a vacation trip through some of the cathedral cities of northern France. In 1855 he repeated this journey with the result that he became so deeply affected by the Gothic masterpieces that he determined to take up architecture as a profession. These trips were planned partly because the youthful Morris had become fired with enthusiasm from reading the chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" in Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*. When, years later, Morris reprinted this chapter at the Kelmscott Press, he added a preface in which he attributes to Ruskin's ideas a profound influence upon the beliefs that dominated his entire life.

In 1856 he articled himself to George Edmund Street, a famous architect of that period; but the youth's visions were far too broad to be satisfied for any length of time with any single line of human endeavor. While still an undergraduate at Oxford he had begun to write poetry, and now, while laboriously studying the fundamentals of architecture in Street's office, he gratified his personal cravings by writing poems which were included in a volume entitled *The Defence of Guenevere*, published in 1858 when the author was but twenty-four years of age.

Morris developed no particular interest in designing English mansions or public buildings, stately though they might be. What he really wanted to do was to reform English taste, and to force people to furnish and decorate their homes with things that were beautiful instead of ugly. Such men as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Philip Webb, and Sir Edward Burne-Jones were fellow-enthusiasts in this esthetic movement, and were of no little assistance in bringing about the realization of some of the visions that they shared with him.

By 1867 William Morris was already recognized as a poet of distinction. Chaucer was his master, and *The Life and Death of Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* are the direct results of his

influence. Morris' real popularity as a writer came with the publication of *The Life and Death of Jason,* and its immediate and unqualified success was a heartening gratification to him in spite of his typical indifference to criticism. To Morris himself, his *Sigurd the Volsung,* published in 1876, was his greatest literary achievement, not because he believed this work to represent higher excellence in craftmanship, but because in his judgment the story itself was the greatest in the world. "This is the Great Story of the North," he wrote, "which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks."

Then, from 1878 to 1890, the poet became reformer, and he sought to accomplish his ideals through the medium of socialism. There was no thought of anarchy in Morris' socialism, but, as an essential part of reforming society, Art was to introduce Beauty. "Society," he wrote in 1896, "at present is organized entirely for the benefit of a privileged class; the working class being only considered in the arrangement as so much machinery. This involves perpetual and enormous *waste,* and the organization for the production of genuine utilities is only a secondary consideration. This waste lands the whole civilized world in a position of *artificial poverty,* which again debars men of all classes from satisfying their rational

desires. Rich men are in slavery to Philistinism, poor men to penury. We can none of us have what we want, except (partially only) by making prodigious sacrifices, which very few men can ever do. Before, therefore, we can so much as hope for any art, we must be free from this artificial poverty. When we are thus free, in my opinion, the natural instincts of mankind toward beauty and incident will take their due place: we shall *want* art, and since we shall be really wealthy, we shall be able to have what we want."

Morris founded the Socialist League in 1884, but by 1890 he discovered that a large number of the members were bent toward anarchy, so he withdrew. Just as he had failed to find a satisfying medium to express his ideals in any single craft, so now, although still believing in his own conception of socialism, he was forced to seek another experiment — and this led him again into the realm of the making of books. The earlier, unsatisfactory experiments in typography were now to find complete and gratifying expression.

To Emery Walker belongs the credit not only of seriously interesting the future Master of the Kelmscott Press to associate himself with the actual production of printed volumes, but also for generously contributing his own practical knowledge in guiding and coöperating with Morris dur-

ing the vital years in which the Kelmscott volumes were produced. Walker was a neighbor of Morris' at Hammersmith, and, as the intimacy between the two men developed, the early printed books Morris had collected, mainly through his interest in the woodcuts, took on a new significance.

It so happened that the printing of Morris' *House of the Wolfings* was just then (1888) being contemplated at the Chiswick Press. The author was consulted as to the type he preferred to have used. At the Press Morris discovered a discarded font, cut fifty years before as an experiment, based upon an early Basle face. With Emery Walker beside him as consultant and guide, Morris settled upon this face for *The House of the Wolfings*, and he also used it in his *Roots of the Mountains*, which shortly followed. This latter book was the most distinguished typographically of any Morris volume published up to this time, and Morris himself declared it to be "the best looking book issued since the seventeenth century."

The success of this direct association with the making of books decided Morris to become a printer. As a first step, he determined to design a type which should express his ideals. His hobby of collecting ancient volumes received a fresh impetus. He now added to his medieval books examples of the best work of the early printers —

such as Lorenzo of Arezzo's *History of Florence*, printed by Jacobus de Rubeis in Venice in 1476, and Jenson's *Pliny* of the same year — so that he might study the methods and principles employed in their type design. While his admiration for the handlettering of the medieval scribes had created an early and a lasting preference for the Gothic model, Morris was much impressed by the beauty which the fifteenth-century printers secured through the simple means of splendidly designed Roman type, without decoration, carefully composed and properly placed upon the paper leaf.

It was natural that he should select the Jenson model, as the letters of this Venetian printer were quite the best of their period. For the first time in translating written characters into metal, the designer had reproduced them not as the scribe actually wrote them, but as he intended to write them.

Morris had the Jenson volume, and some pages from that printed by Rubeis, photographed on a large scale, from which enlargements he studied the characteristics with minutest care. When he felt that he had mastered the principles upon which type designing rested, and was competent to separate the merits of the early types from their defects, he produced his first font of letters. A comparison of these characters with those of the Jenson model discloses the interesting fact that, in spite

of what Morris set himself to do, he could not break away from his Gothic tendencies. This was his famous "Golden" type, so called because he originally intended to make Caxton's translation of *The Golden Legend* the first book in which it would be used. Through an accident this plan had to be changed: it so happened that the hand-made paper with which Morris had provided himself was of such size that only two pages of *The Golden Legend* could have been printed at one time; so Morris' own *Story of the Glittering Plain*, a small quarto, was substituted.

Pleased as he was with the results of his first experiments as a type designer, Morris still felt the urge to produce a font which should be wholly Gothic. The Gothic design adopted in the very earliest fonts gave way in favor of the Roman characters because of the difficulty it offered to readers. Morris undertook to produce a Gothic type which should embrace all its characteristics, and still be readable.

He took for his models pages printed by Schoeffer at Mayence, Mentelin at Strassburg, and Gunther Zainer at Augsburg. He studied these just as he had his Italian models, and did away with what he called the "spiky ends and undue compression," which he felt produced the illegibility. This Morris called "Troy," and it was his

favorite type. It was first cut in Great Primer size, but when this proved too large for a double-column book, such as the *Chaucer,* he had it recut in Pica size, and called it the " Chaucer " type.

With the types provided for, Morris undertook to design the initials, borders, and ornaments. At first these designs showed the influence of the Italian manuscripts of the fifteenth century; but by the time Morris' Troy type was completed his sympathies had passed away from the Italian to the German. These early designs appeared in *Poems by the Way,* written by Morris, and printed at the Kelmscott Press. Morris also designed new initials, borders, and ornaments to harmonize with the heavier face of the new Troy letter.

The prodigious industry of the man is shown by the unbelievable number of designs he personally made while carrying on his own shoulders such a multitude of details accumulating from so many varied interests. There were 384 initial letters, 57 borders, 108 marginal ornaments, 26 frames for pictures, 28 title pages and inscriptions, 33 initial words, to say nothing of line endings and printer's marks, aggregating not less than 644 designs drawn and engraved within the period of seven years.

All these wood blocks are now in the British Museum, placed there in 1898 on the condition that they should not be reproduced or printed from

for a century. The type itself remains in the hands of the Morris Trustees who, since the closing of the Kelmscott Press, have only permitted its use in printing certain of Morris' works, or in special editions of which they believed Morris would have approved. The decorations themselves have never been printed with authorization in any but those books issued by William Morris himself.

As one might expect from a man who approached the art of printing with such infinite respect for detail, Morris took into careful consideration the spacing between the words and the leading between the lines. He abhorred white spots in the type page. In his own writings, he recast sentences to make them fill out the lines; in printing the writings of others, where such liberties could not be taken, he employed a leaf floret — a questionable expedient in the minds of some, who feel that the repetition of these spots of decoration form a blemish in an otherwise perfect page. The same fondness for massing the black of the printed page induced him to employ little or no leading between the lines. His type faces were so designed as to occupy the entire body. He used a thin lead with his Troy type, a " hair " lead with his Chaucer face, but set the type solid in his sixteen-mo volumes.

In making his margins, Morris properly insisted

upon considering the two facing pages as a unit. The fact that the placing of the type upon the paper leaf of the Kelmscott volumes so closely follows the precedent set by the early printers is one explanation of their satisfying beauty.

Morris went as thoroughly into the matter of his hand-made paper as he did into all of the other details which entered into the making of his books. The first paper supplied was 16 x 11 inches, and contained a conventional Primrose between the initials W. M. as water mark. Later, a somewhat larger and stronger paper was used, of similar material, having as water mark a Perch holding a spray in its mouth. A third size of this same paper had as water mark an Apple with the initials W. M. Morris was insistent that the wire marks in his laid paper "must not be too strong, so as to give a ribbed appearance." To secure the effect he had in mind, the wire molds were woven by hand, to reproduce the slight irregularity seen in the texture of those papers used by the early printers.

The skins on which his vellum copies are printed were at first secured from Rome, but when it became impossible to obtain a further supply, owing to the heavy demands made by the Vatican, Morris turned to English manufacturers. Because of the oily nature of the vellum, which makes presswork difficult, the scheme was devised of having the sur-

face artificially filled in with chalk, which presented a perfect printing surface. In the minds of some experts a doubt has been raised as to the permanency of this artificial surface. There are only three complete vellum sets of the Kelmscott books known to exist. Morris planned to manufacture his own ink, but this intention was never carried out.

All the presswork was done upon hand presses, under the supervision of Emery Walker, whose practical knowledge of printing assisted William Morris successfully to translate his ideals into terms of type and paper. As early as 1889 Walker had been asked to be a partner in the Kelmscott Press, and although he did not accept that actual relation, he was so closely associated with Morris throughout the entire life of the Press that no important step was taken without his advice and approval. In fact, Morris' earliest plan was to have his volumes put into type in Hammersmith, and then printed in Walker's office in Clifford's Inn.

The early publications of the Kelmscott Press were issued and sold through London publishers. Reeves and Turner, for instance, distributed *The Glittering Plain* (1891), *Poems by the Way* (1891), *Love Lyrics and Songs of Proteus* (1892), *The Defence of Guenevere* (1892), *A Dream of John Bull* (1892), *The Poems of William Shakespeare* (1893), *News from Nowhere* (1893), *The*

Order of Chivalry (1892) and *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* (1893), and *The Life of Thomas Wolsey* (1893); George Allen published *The Nature of Gothic* (1892); while Bernard Quaritch issued *The Golden Legend* (1892), *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (1892), and *The History of Reynard the Fox* (1893). After the appearance of this last volume, Morris decided to act as publisher as well as printer of the Kelmscott volumes. "There is really no risk in it," he remarked. "I shall get more money, and the public will have to pay less." The issue of *The History of Godefrey of Boloyne* (1893) bore the imprint, "Published by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press," and marked the end of the divided responsibility of printer and publisher.

William Morris believed that there were enough booklovers who had sufficient appreciation of art in printing to pay the higher prices which were necessary to secure the beauty and excellence of quality in the Kelmscott volumes, and he was not disappointed. While he never expected to make of the Kelmscott Press a commercial success, yet the income showed sufficient profit to enable him to spare no expense in expressing his ideal conceptions in the production of his books.

The Kelmscott Press began active operation in 1891, in a cottage at 16 Upper Mall, Hammer-

smith, London, only a step from William Morris' home. Four months later, larger quarters were secured at 14 Upper Mall, to which, in 1894, number 21 Upper Mall was added. Here, during the seven years of its existence, were printed fifty-two works comprising sixty-six volumes. The composition and the presswork were done on the premises; the binding, in vellum and half-holland, was the work of an outside firm.

The masterpiece of the Kelmscott Press was the *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, which was begun in 1892 and required five years for its completion. The actual printing occupied a little less than two years. At first Morris planned to print this in the Troy face, but the trial pages demonstrated that the type was of too large a size for a double-column book. The Troy designs were therefore recut in smaller size, and called "Chaucer." Morris secured the coöperation of Sir Edward Burne-Jones as illustrator, and he himself undertook the task of designing the initial letters, borders, and decorations.

One delay followed another until Morris became fearful that the project might never be completed, particularly as by this time his health was seriously impaired. He finished the decoration for the first page in March, 1893. He was entirely satisfied with it, exclaiming, "My eyes! How good

it is! " During this same period he devoted himself to his metrical version of *Beowulf*.

In the meantime, Burne-Jones was experiencing great difficulty in having his designs satisfactorily rendered upon wood, and Morris dolefully remarked, after comparing notes with his friend and collaborator, " We shall be twenty years at this rate in getting it out."

By June, 1894, the great work was fairly begun. " *Chaucer* getting on well," Morris notes in his diary; " such lovely designs "; and at the end of June he records that he hopes to begin the actual printing within a month, and that in about three months more all the pictures and nearly all the borders would be ready for the whole of the Canterbury Tales.

In May, 1895, he discovered that many of the sheets of the *Chaucer* had become discolored by some unfortunate ingredient of the ink, but, to his immense relief, he succeeded in removing the yellow stain by bleaching: " The check of the *Chaucer*," he writes, " flattens life for me somewhat; but I am going hard into the matter, and in about a fortnight hope to know the worst of it."

In December, 1895, the *Chaucer* was sufficiently near completion to encourage him to design a binding for it. Even here he found another difficulty: " Leather is not good now," he said. " What used

to take nine months to cure is now done in three. They used to say, 'What's longest in the tanyard stays least time in the market,' but that no longer holds good. People don't know how to buy now; they'll take anything."

Morris' anxiety for the *Chaucer* increased as it came near to completion: "I'd like it finished tomorrow," he answered an inquirer. "Every day beyond tomorrow that it isn't done is one too many." To a visitor in his library, looking through the printed sheets, who remarked upon the added beauty of those which followed the Canterbury Tales, where the picture pages face one another in pairs, Morris exclaimed in alarm, "Now don't you go saying that to Burne-Jones or he'll be wanting to do the first part over again; and the worst of that would be, that he would want to do all the rest over again, because the other would be so much better, and then we should never get done, but always be going round and round in a circle."

The daily progress of the work upon the *Chaucer* was the one interest that sustained his waning energies. The last three blocks were brought to him on March 21, 1896. The Easter holidays almost killed him: "Four mouldy Sundays in a mouldy row," he writes in his diary; "the Press shut, and *Chaucer* at a standstill."

On May 6, 1896, all the picture sheets were

printed, and the block for the title page was submitted for his approval, the final printing being completed two days later. On June 2, the first two bound copies were delivered to him, one of which he immediately sent to Burne-Jones. His own copy is now in the library of Exeter College, Oxford.

This was William Morris' swan song, his death occurring October 3, 1896. Among those friends closest to him during his last days were Sir Edward and Lady Burne-Jones, and Emery Walker.

The personal appearance of William Morris was as striking and unusual as was his work. J. W. Mackail, in his *Life of William Morris*, draws a vivid picture of the man. " In his suit of blue serge and soft felt hat," Mackail writes, " he had something of the look of a working engineer and something of that of a sailor. He was walking down Kensington High Street one morning when a fireman from the brigade station stopped him and said, ' Beg pardon, sir, but were you ever captain of the Sea Swallow? ' Indeed, a stranger might very well, not only from his clothing but from his rocking walk and ruddy complexion, have taken him for a Baltic sea captain. In those days he had not yet adopted the blue cotton shirts which, in later years, became his invariable dress and almost of the essence of his appearance. The capacity for producing and annexing dirt, noted by Rossetti, remained

strong in him; and when he began to add dyeing to other handicrafts which he practised, appearances were completely given up. After he ceased to live at Queen Square in 1872, he very often went to lunch at the Faulkners' house, a few doors off. He went along, if the day were fine, without a hat and in his French workman's blouse; and a new housemaid of the Faulkners', when she let him in thus dressed for the first time, went down to the kitchen in some perplexity, describing him to the cook as the butcher. Mr. Ellis, in the days of their first acquaintance, was privately warned by his confidential clerk 'not to let that Mr. Morris run up a long account.' How he looked to other people was a matter that never entered his head, and he never looked at himself. He had a curious dislike of mirrors. One of the most obvious peculiarities of his house at all times was the absence of mirrors or looking glasses; there were none at all in any of the living rooms, and none in his bedroom."

Another writer (M. C. Gillington) describes Morris' personal appearance as "that of a slovenly and unkempt magnificence. His extraordinary and abundant hair, with its thick, strong curl 'like wrought metal'; his massive head with its vague, inexpressive eyes, and beautifully moulded mouth; his fine build and height, dimly indicative of almost superhuman strength; his clumsy looking

but exquisitely adroit hands — all these traits combined to produce that 'rum and indescribable deportment' which was at once the delight and despair of his friends."

He had a loom set up in his bedroom at which he worked sometimes for eight or nine hours in a day, finding it necessary to provide actual manual labor as an outlet for his tremendous physical energy. Anything that was medieval appealed to him, and he tried to force his ideals upon a public which at first was indifferent. It was his ambition to "make the common as though it were not common." He turned from one art to another, striving to secure from each the expression of an ideal which the technique of the others denied him. Thus, while he could create atmosphere in his poems, it was through his work in textiles that he satisfied his demand for color.

"That talk of inspiration," he once said, "is sheer nonsense. There is no such thing; it is a mere matter of craftsmanship. If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he is weaving tapestry, he had better shut up — he will never do any good at all."

This was the man who brought printing back into its own as a fine art, and in the brief space of seven years produced examples which must always stand as the most astounding exhibit any printer ever produced or ever will produce. It matters

little that he departed from his own creed in so overloading his page with decoration as to add to the illegibility of the type; it is of no particular consequence that the Chaucer type was far better adapted to *The Golden Legend* than the Golden; it is only of passing interest that the Kelmscott volumes as a whole are *objets d'art* rather than books. The vital point is that William Morris by his exquisite craftsmanship demonstrated to the world that in spite of diverting modern conditions it was still possible to make the Book a fitting vehicle for the thought it preserved for eternity. And, far beyond his acknowledged position as poet and writer, William Morris' final expression of Beauty will go down to posterity through the physical splendor of his printed books.

This was the greatest benefaction William Morris gave the world. The high quality of our present modern printing is due to him more than to any other single force. His volumes were not made for the proletariat, yet the influence of his work has been and is today greater than that of any other figure in the history of the Book. "My work is, . . to bring before people's eyes the image of the thing my heart is filled with," Morris wrote — and in this image later builders of books have found inspiration and encouragement for individual expression.

IX · COBDEN-SANDERSON AND EMERY WALKER

Printing as an Art made Practical

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William Morris was more fortunate than was John Baskerville in that there were others competent and eager to keep alive and to continue the renaissance he had begun; and this was equally fortunate for the history of the Book itself. The Kelmscott volumes, as they were published, were greatly admired but they were not wholly understood. The study of the history and precedent of the art of printing on the part of those who make books is a practice of comparatively recent years, and except to those familiar with the examples of early types and decorations that chart the path of the master artist-printers since the printed book came into being, the Morris volumes could only seem the apotheosis of affected eccentricity. No wonder that even the heads of the great printing establishments of the 1890's, to whom the words "Jenson" and "Elzevir" meant only distinguishing names for foundry types, thought the Kelmscott volumes the product of an abnormal brain!

Morris, in his printing, departed widely from the splendid basic principles he laid down in writing. Books are made to be read, and anything which tends to make the reading of books difficult, no matter how beautiful that thing may be, has no permanent place in the physical aspect of the book itself. Jenson's type is simple and legible; Morris' Golden type, for which he tells us he took the Jenson pattern as model, is only partially legible, and when overloaded with decoration, superb though that decoration may be, the difficulty in reading is that much the greater. Morris saw the type page as a solid black mass, even inserting floret decorations to prevent white spaces from appearing in the line. This presented the type to the eye in its richest form and color, but added to the difficulty of reading.

Had printing slipped backwards after Morris, as it did after Baskerville, the Kelmscott volumes might always have remained as examples of an exotic phase in the art of bookmaking, and thus have failed in their ultimate influence. Fortunately, at Morris' death, there were two men in England, both intimately familiar with his ideals and with his work, who were ready and well-equipped to express what Morris considered the basic principles of fine bookmaking more exactly than he himself had been able to do. It has been

through their work at the Doves Press that the merits of the Morris books have been more fully revealed and shown to be practical.

All through the period of the Kelmscott Press, Thomas James Sanderson (or Cobden-Sanderson, as he wrote it after his marriage to Anne, daughter of Richard Cobden) had been establishing himself as the greatest binder in England. He was essentially a dreamer, yet was a man possessed of unyielding will. Like Morris, he had experimented in many lines of human endeavor in his determined effort to find the medium which would best convey his message to the world. He was born at Alnwick, in Northumberland, England, on December 2, 1840. At seventeen he was apprenticed to an engineer, but business was distasteful. He began to study for Cambridge, with the idea of entering the Church. At Trinity College he spent three years studying for mathematical honors, then gave up all idea of going into the Church and left Cambridge, refusing honors and a degree, which he might have had, as a protest against the competitive system. The next seven or eight years were devoted to a study of literature. He was a prodigious reader, and the conflicting ideas of the deep thinkers he absorbed seemed to produce a disturbing chaos in his mind. When thirty years of age, after trying and discarding the profession of medi-

cine, he was admitted to the Bar, later abandoning this to become a manual laborer. That he realized the tragedy of being out of step with his fellow men is shown by his own comment, "How big a world we aspire to occupy in thought, and how poor is our control over the little one given us to rule." From his *Journals* one may pick out the intricate thread of the man's life as expressed in his work, almost smothered by the mass of socialistic and philosophic comments that record the desperate struggle of an earnestly striving individuality unable to discover an adequate medium of expression.

Then came his marriage in 1882, which was the turning point in his life. "Marriage has imposed upon me ambition and an obligation," he wrote. In June, 1883, the Cobden-Sandersons were calling on the William Morrises. "I was talking with Mrs. Morris," he records, "and saying how anxious I was to use my hands. 'Then why don't you learn bookbinding?' she said. 'That would add an art to our little community, and we would work together.'"

Two days later he saw De Coverley, the London binder, and made his arrangements. The *Journals* contain frequent references to his progress, and a year later to a day he wrote, "I am now the proprietor of a workshop." This was at 30 Maiden

Lane, London, where he remained about a year, then moving to Goodyers. Even then, at forty-four years of age, Cobden-Sanderson's father still questioned his ability to settle down:

"At dinner my father asked how I was getting on at De Coverley's. I told him, and described the processes through which a book has to be put in binding it. I thought I saw an expression of sadness in his face as he looked at me the while and listened without a word. Handicraft such as I described perhaps seemed to him far other work, and to lead to far other, if any, fame than that which he had dreamt for me. But I dream of other things, too, beyond the mere beautiful binding of a book. The heavens overarch me the while, and the stars are in their places; and the world moves on through all time in silence to its unknown fulfillment. In that greater rhythm, my own still life aiming at perfect, at silent, at beautiful workmanship, aims, too, to find its place, to find the truer rhythm, lost, and yet found, within the greater."

Always the dreamer, but at last finding a medium through which to express his message to the world! "Other men express their messages in different *media*," he once said to a friend — "in stone or on canvas. I have discovered that the book is my medium. When I bind and decorate a volume I seem to be setting myself, like a magnetized

needle or like an ancient temple, in line and all square, not alone with my own ideal of society, but with that orderly and rhythmical whole which is the revelation of science and the normal of developed humanity."

It was an achievement which should prove inspiring to those who have felt themselves drifting, for a man forty-four years old to discover at last a pursuit in which he could make himself a master and yet remain true to those same ideals that had previously proved a liability. A few quotations from the *Journals* are revealing, and however quixotic they may seem, the fact remains that Cobden-Sanderson left a name which stands high among a distinguished company of master bookmakers:

"I must not forget, in taking to the handicraft of bookbinding, that there are higher things in the world, higher ambitions even for me than to produce well-bound, beautifully bound books. That handicraft is merely in the first place something whereby to earn an honest living, and in the second place a means which shall put me into honest and real relations with the bulk of my fellow men. . . I am not playing for my own hand. My aim should be, not the survival of my own work, or its 'price in the market,' but the creation and survival of the spirit with which I would have all

work pursued, and all beauty designed. That should be my supreme work in life. . . Had I it in my mind only to produce lovely things I might have had many customers round my door. But my mind was really far away. It had for its Vision primarily the universe — it was that which, in little, I sought to re-express; not itself, though that I held to be man's function through the ages, but in its action upon myself, its order, its aloofness, its wonder, and sometimes its beauty. This I had and have in view, and having it in view I responded coldly to the demand for mere 'things in themselves,' even for the Book Beautiful in itself. Ah, the Vision — could I realize that, were it in symbol only, and set the world to worship it! Then the things of beauty, and of order, and of wonder, would follow of themselves, be life's life expression, be the worship God intended. Aiming at the one, I have missed the other. But that other still abides — as my life's aim.

"I have not sought in my work to satisfy the instincts or exclusiveness of collectors, but rather to impart that sense of order and still serenity of beauty which is excited by the contemplation of the universe itself, or of some of its isolated scenes — scenes of order and beauty in themselves. This I think is essential in all art, be the objects of its creation great or small, the building of cities or

empires, or the binding or the decoration of a book. And though I should fail to attract the attention of collectors, and fall with my work into oblivion, yet will I not myself lose hope of the goal I aspired to reach, nor of that to which I aspired to direct mankind, but will die in the divine hope that what I have aspired to be and to see, I shall yet see and be — God's face, and God's worshipper, all conscient. . .

"I observe in people a tendency to admire and to get into a state of enthusiasm about my bindings, and about such work generally for its own sake. I do not share in that admiration or enthusiasm, and do not wish to. My binding I wish indeed to be beautiful, but I still more wish it to be a sign and symbol of good social work, and of the spirit in which all work should be done. I would wish with my own heart, and the hearts of all men, to be filled with a high social ideal to be fulfilled in this life, and to be the seed of a still higher fruition in the after-life, of which otherwise we cannot even so much as dream in this."

The establishment of the Doves Bindery, with which Cobden-Sanderson's name will always be inseparably associated, was accomplished on March 20, 1893, "in the little house on the Upper Mall called 'The Nook.'" With the exception of Douglas Cockerell, the members of the staff came from

Rivière's. From that time on no book was personally bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

After William Morris' death in 1896, the idea began to take form in Cobden-Sanderson's mind of establishing a Press. Inasmuch as his own experience in making books was limited solely to the binding, he felt it necessary to supplement himself in this projected undertaking, and it was natural that he should approach Emery Walker with a proposition to join him in the adventure of making complete volumes which would express their mutual ideals, chastened and developed by the experiences they had both had with William Morris. Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson stood ready to supply the capital. Walker finally agreed to join Cobden-Sanderson, and in 1900 the Doves Press began to take definite form.

It is difficult to understand why Cobden-Sanderson's name is almost always mentioned alone in connection with the splendid volumes which were issued as a joint product from the Doves Press during the sixteen years of its existence. Perhaps the explanation lies in his ability to write. Cobden-Sanderson possessed the happy faculty of being able to express in words an idealism as applied to the making of books which he himself could never have put into practical operation because of his lack of knowledge of every process that goes into

a book with the single exception of the binding; yet in his masterful essay, *The Ideal Book* (1901), he lays down the basic principles of fine bookmaking with a clearness that cannot be surpassed. Cobden-Sanderson had never even seen a printing press until he called at Walker's establishment one day after their association began, for that express purpose. Emery Walker, on the other hand, was a practical printer and a skilful engraver even before he served as adviser and guide to William Morris, and during his connection with the Kelmscott Press he naturally added much to his typographic stature. It was he who first introduced William Morris to Mr. Prince, to whom Morris refers as the cutter of his punches. It was Walker who designed the famous Doves type, which, in the opinion of many experts, has never been equaled among the privately cut faces.

When Morris' library was sold, after his death, Walker purchased the copy of Jenson's *Pliny* of 1476 which Morris had studied, and he used this as the model for his new design. The merit of the Doves type is that it adheres closely to its Jenson model, whereas other faces based upon the same model depart sufficiently from the pattern to lose the peculiar charm which Walker's type retains. Jenson, while a great typographer, was a poor pressman, and it is difficult to find a single example

in which the type is not clogged by an excess of ink. Walker, being an engraver by trade, was able to get beneath the surface impression and to preserve the original design. Cobden-Sanderson did not see this type until it was practically completed, and the designs have always been in Emery Walker's possession.

With a single exception, Walker selected the compositors and all the pressmen employed at the Doves Press. He was at the establishment daily, personally supervising the composition and the presswork. Cobden-Sanderson read the proofs on all the books with the exception of the *Doves Bible*, which was read by the staff of the Cambridge University Press.

Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker decided at the very beginning of their association to print all their volumes in this single type in one size, and to omit all decorations. The Morris books had carried woodcut capitals and borders to their highest possible expression, and the founders of the Doves Press felt that any decorated volumes that followed the Kelmscott books must be in the nature of an anti-climax. The only departure from this decision was to insert occasionally an exceedingly beautiful single red capital letter, designed by Cobden-Sanderson. These are simple, in perfect harmony with the line of the type, and add much

to the composite beauty of the pages on which they appear.

Cobden-Sanderson expresses his attitude toward the Morris books in a masterly paragraph in *The Ideal Book*. "The Book Beautiful," he writes, "is a composite thing made up of many parts and may be made beautiful by the beauty of each of its parts — its literary content, its material or materials, its writing or printing, its illumination or illustration, its binding and decoration — of each of its parts in subordination to the whole which collectively they constitute; or it may be made beautiful by the supreme beauty of one or more of its parts, all the other parts subordinating or even effacing themselves for the sake of this one or more, and each one in turn being capable of playing this supreme part, and each in its own peculiar and characteristic way. On the other hand, each contributory craft may usurp the functions of the rest and of the whole, and growing beautiful beyond all bounds ruin for its own the common cause."

The first volume issued by the Doves Press was the *Agricola* of Tacitus, in January, 1901, and this was followed at intervals by a series of beautifully printed volumes, the masterpiece of which is undoubtedly the English *Bible*, in five large quarto volumes, which appeared in 1903–1905.

This work is printed throughout in one size of type with no leads between the lines and without paragraphs, the divisions being indicated by paragraph marks. The only decorations employed are the graceful initial letters, printed in red at the beginning of each book — in no way interfering with the readability of the page.

These volumes are the apotheosis of simplicity, and the more a student of typography studies their pages, the more he comes to understand how great a piece of work they really are. Emery Walker and Cobden-Sanderson had made themselves familiar with those basic principles which had entered into the work of their great predecessors; they had learned that in his books each of the great master printers had expressed his own individuality. To this extent only did they copy: they put themselves into the *Doves Bible*, and made of it in typography and presswork, in paper, and in binding, as perfect an expression of their own ideals as will be found in the whole history of the Book.

Cobden-Sanderson paid a visit to America in 1908 and delivered lectures at Harvard University, in Boston, and elsewhere upon *The Ideal Book*. He was a simple man, unaccustomed to being lionized as is the American habit. He found that in America he was looked upon as the sole genius of the Doves Press, and the idea appealed

to him. Emery Walker at that time held a half interest, and Cobden-Sanderson, on his return to London, made overtures to purchase this from him. Walker, however, was particularly interested in his association with the Doves books, and therefore declined to sell. To relieve the deadlock, a friend who was fully acquainted with all the circumstances of the partnership, suggested that Walker should allow Cobden-Sanderson the use of the Doves type for the time being, and that the sole ownership in the property should be vested in whichever one of the partners survived the other. This solution of the difficulty apparently proved acceptable both to Cobden-Sanderson and to Emery Walker, for the agreement was formally and legally drawn up.

By this time Cobden-Sanderson was nearly seventy years of age. The trip to America had proved a tax upon his strength, and he decided to close the Press. This was not so simple an undertaking as at first appeared, and it was not until 1916, with the publication of his *Catalogue Raisonné*, final edition, that the work actually came to an end. That this proved a severe wrench is shown by an entry in the *Journals:* "I have closed my Press, and now have no medium at hand wherein and wherewith to express my admiration for what I admire or for what I love. I have indeed my voice,

my living self, and I have my pen. Will these suffice? "

Then came the act which can never be understood by those who knew Cobden-Sanderson — the destruction of the Doves type. That the intensity of his devotion to everything that entered into his work was abnormal, amounting almost to a fetish, may explain his unwillingness to have the type used after his death, but even this cannot reconcile the apparent disregard of his agreement with Walker, toward whom, until their disagreement, he had shown every evidence of friendship. Walker's attitude was characteristically generous. "I am unwilling to attribute it to the motive apparent on the surface," he said, "and think that possibly he was suffering from some form of megalomania." The detached memoranda Cobden-Sanderson wrote in his *Journals* would seem to bear out Walker's philosophic comment, but they make it evident that his act was not one of impulse. As early as 1911 Cobden-Sanderson wrote: "To the bed of the river Thames, the river on whose banks I have printed all my books, I bequeath the Doves Press font of type — the punches, the matrices, and the type in use at the time of my death; and may the river in its tide and flow pass over them to and from the great sea forever and forever, or until its tide and flow forever cease; then may they

share the fate of all the world, and pass from change to change forever upon the tides of time, untouched by other use and all else."

The record of the destruction itself, in entries beginning August 31, 1916, and continuing to the end, is dramatic, and clearly supports the theory of super-obsession: "I went out at sundown to 'bequeath' a page of type to the 'bed of the river'; but it alighted, not on the bed of the river, but on a ledge of the far pier of the bridge. . . Imagine my consternation, and what I had to endure all that night, . . the type, *the* type . . . exposed to view, hopelessly beyond my reach. . . After a struggle I stood up indifferent. I would let the thing go its own way. I would neither attempt to rescue the type nor would I disown it if discovered. I would take refuge in the infinitudes. I am now on my guard, and throw only type — clear of the bridge. . . And all night I feared to be asked by a policeman . . . what I had got in my box. . . The wind is still raging, the earth still revolves . . . and in this great theatre of events I sit up and write my adventure, 'bequeathing' the Doves type to the Thames."

Cobden-Sanderson died on September 7, 1922.

The destruction of the Doves type was a great loss to the history of the Book. Without Emery Walker neither the Kelmscott nor the Doves Press

volumes could have been what they are, yet book-lovers will never know just where his contribution begins and ends. Had the Doves Press continued after Cobden-Sanderson's death under Emery Walker's sole control, as it would have done had the agreement been carried out, the books thus produced would have answered many questions. It is an anomaly that the name of Emery Walker, who stands today as the Master Printer of the World, should appear by itself on no printed volume which may be said to express his own separate individuality and ideals.

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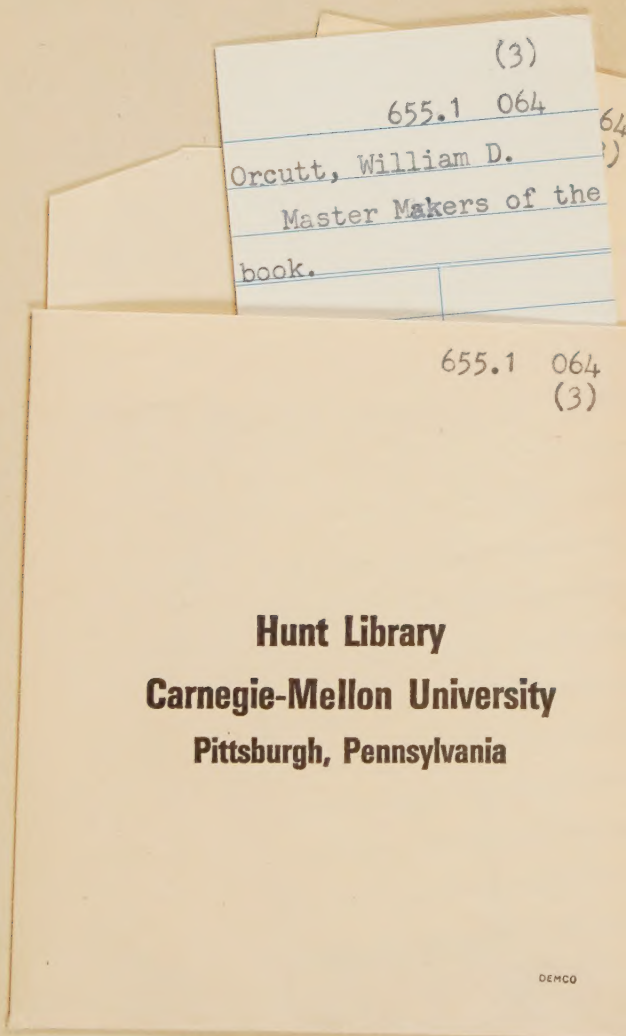
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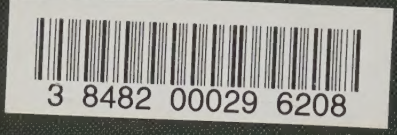
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